

LONDON THE READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION.]

[IS RESERVED.]

No. 662.—VOL. XXVI.

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 8, 1876.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE FORTUNE-TELLER.]

THE ISLAND MYSTERY.

CHAPTER I.

Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten of the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?

A FINE, athletic young man, with a gun on his shoulder, came bounding swiftly down a grassy slope to the beach, where a trim, fairy little sailing boat was tossing on the waves with but a single occupant—a stoutly framed, rough-featured, oldish, but not elderly man, with that unmistakable air which marks all alike, whether master or sailor, who roam the seas for a livelihood.

"So you've come at last, Master Mark," said Rufus White, in a querulous tone. "I began to think you'd changed your mind, and was going to moor her again."

"It was a shame to keep you waiting so long, Rufus. I beg your pardon. But my mother has grown so nervous in these years of my absence in Germany that I hardly know what to make of it. It took me an hour at least to calm her fears and convince her that I was capable of handling my gun safely and managing the boat without upsetting."

Rufus White laughed.

"Why, does the mistress think your book studying has made you forget the old sports? I should know better than that. Them that has love for what they learn won't be forgetting, though it's years and years before they come again to the old ways. Why, Master Mark, there wasn't a lad in all the shire could beat you with the gun or oar. And as for the sailing of this little eggshell, the mistress might have known old Rufus White wouldn't learn you wrong. I should as soon think of my not knowing how to handle the ropes, because I haven't been a voyage this ten year past Christmas, as of doubting you was all right in the old sports."

"Thank you, Rufus; I hope I shan't disappoint you. I assure you I bring all the old boyish eagerness and love for the sport; it seems doubly delightful after my long abstinence."

While he spoke the young man stowed away his gun in the stern and leaped lightly into the boat.

Rufus began to hoist the sail, but Mark interposed smilingly:

"Nay, nay, Rufus; if I took you for company to satisfy my mother's apprehensions, I didn't mean you should share in the work. Take a seat, Rufus, and play the passenger. You may talk as much as you like, but that's all the privilege I shall allow you. I tell you, man, my fingers are fairly aching for this business. How trim and neat you've kept the little Witch! Oh, how many times I've thought of her, and the breezy races she has given me over this cool bay, when I was at my wits' ends over perplexing, knotty problems in the close, stifed room of the German university! But I'm back again at last, my beauty, and many a jolly day we'll spend together, to make up for our long estrangement."

The old sailor dropped upon the seat with a look of perfect martyrdom, although he answered cheerily.

"Well, to be sure, Master Mark, it will seem rather queer to me to sit still; I'm used to working my passage wherever I go; but I can understand just how you feel about it, and it would be a shame that you shouldn't hold the ropes and give the Witch a hint of the way you want her to go. She's just as jaunty as ever, and as quick to the helm as your Black Prince is to the rein. I've taken her out every now and then just to keep her from being lonesome."

Mark had set the sail, and he took his seat now, his fine eyes beaming with pleasure.

"Oh, Rufus, this is grand, this is exhilarating!" exclaimed he, as the smart breeze filled the sail, and the little craft, beaming over on her side, went dashing through the waves; "how I have longed for this freedom in my wearisome college life!"

"And that's natural enough to my thinking," re-

plied the privileged old servant. "I s'pose there's good comes from larning, but shiver my timbers, if it seemed to me like the right stuff for men to work over, crooking themselves over books, and growing as pale and puny-looking as a woman. Only look at your hands, Master Mark; they're as delicate as the mistress', every whit, and your face don't look so brown and ruddy as in the old days, I can tell you, now."

"Maybe not," replied Mark Shenstone, laughing heartily at the half-indignant, half-commiserating look on the sailor's face; "but it will not take many sails with you, Rufus, to brown me up into a respectable complexion, even according to your ideas. I shall never be the worse for my college experience, and it is ended at last. But how is the game nowadays, Rufus? Shall I be likely to find the birds, as of old, around the little island which used to be my favourite resort?"

Rufus suddenly blinked his little gray eyes.

"Why, Master Mark, is it there you're steering? Maybe, then, you've heard nothing about it since you've been away?"

"Heard? why, no! what should there be for me to hear?"

Rufus shook his head with deliberate gravity.

"Plenty that's strange and perplexing to honest folks. It has got a new name too. It isn't the 'Little Island' any longer; it's the 'Wizard's Isle' now with everybody."

"And I infer that there is some uncanny history to account for, the weird name. Come, Rufus, spin away at the yarn in true sailor fashion, while I tack a little; for despite your ominous looks, I'm bound to the old island, and this breeze won't give us a straight course for her."

"You are like all the rest of the young folks, Master Mark, you laugh it off, as if it was only an idle story; but older heads and sterner minds see much danger may be brewed from such an evil neighbourhood. If he has not dealings with the Old

One, that gray-bearded old hermit, I should like to know how he produces such hobgoblin results."

"Why, Rufus, you're more mysterious yourself than the old hermit can be; why don't you tell me the facts, in a ship-shape fashion?"

Rufus scraped off his old tarpaulin and made a jerking bow.

"I beg your pardon, Master Mark; I'll try to do better this time. You see, 'twas two years ago certain, this last spring, I was out in this very boat skimming around, just to pass away the time—for I could not seem to get a bite at my line anywhere; and I had just given up the idea of fishing when I sighted a schooner bearing down from the channel this way. That's a queer course, says I; what in the name of Neptune are they coming where there's no wharf nor business for them? You see she was a heavy, lubberly craft, not trim and jaunty enough for a yacht. Well, I kept my eye on them, and pretty soon, when the schooner had got pretty well off that little island, what did she do but tack, and get as near as the shallow water would admit, and then a boat was lowered, and quite a load, it seemed to me, went from the schooner to the island. They stayed about three hours—maybe not but two, for time drags slow with anybody that's watching—and then back again went the boat to the schooner; her head was put about, and she went scudding along with a spanking breeze back again into the stream.

"That's a queer proceeding, says I to myself. I'll see what they've left on the little island. So I up with the sail and made for the shore myself. The first thing I saw when I landed was a great, tall man, all wrapped up in a gray gown like a monk or a mummy, with a long staff in his hand, and his beard, white as snow, hung down the whole length of his breast. He fixed on me that burning, serpent-like eye of his, and the blood seemed to chill in my veins under it, as if he had conjured up a spell to freeze me into a statue of ice.

"Well, he leaned over on that queer staff, with his white beard streaming down to his waist, and that awful eye on me, and I don't deny, Master Mark, my knees were weak, and my teeth chattering, though I did my best to make a bold show.

"Good day, sir," said I, as respectfully as I know how.

"He waved his hand, and it looked like a bird's claw more than anything else.

"What have I to do with good days or bad? I came to hide from mankind in this lonely island, and my first hour is molested with the hated spectre. I have no time for idle talk; I must gather moss for my couch and collect herbs for my food. Leave me in peace."

"Now I was honest meaning and peaceable in my notions, and for all I was so frightened at his strange looks I felt indignant at this rough way of dealing with me.

"I meant no harm," answered I, hotly; "had you known me better, perhaps you had treated me a little more civilly; good sir, I might provide you a more comfortable bed than one of moss."

"He laughed, and then, as true as I live, the trees up above him took up the sound, and flung down goblin laughs, in all tones and ways, and there he stood, as if he heard not a sound, but kept those blazing eyes on me.

"What do I want of comfortable beds? I told you I fled from the blandishments of the world; the earth will furnish all I need—ay, she will furnish more than you dream, you who guess nothing of the secrets she whispers to me. If I knew you better! Ha, ha! poor worm! how shallow is your knowledge compared to mine. Hist, I will tell you what I know about you."

"Then he stamped his foot, and thrust out that long staff, and turned his head, as if listening. Will you believe it, Master Mark? I heard myself a small voice coming out of the tree on which he fixed those great, glowering eyes; and though it talked some foreign lingo, I knew it was really talking to him. Then in a minute he turned to me.

"You were a sailor once. Your last voyage was from Calcutta to Liverpool. You live at the cottage belonging to the great family of these parts. What was their name?" He turned his head and looked into the tree again. Straightway he answered right out, in plain English, 'Shenstone.' That was too much for me. I looked hurriedly over the tree to make sure there was nothing on it, not even a parrot, and then I took to my heels; and when I got to the boat I didn't stop to use the sails for tacking, but took the oars and rowed away for dear life."

Mark Shenstone laughed till the tears rolled down his face.

"Well, well, Rufus, I didn't suppose anything mortal could make you show the white feather. So you ran away? That is rich."

Rufus was half indignant.

"Master Mark, I've met many a terrible storm, and I've had one tussle with cannibal dogs off the coast of Zanzibar, and I never flinched; but do you think I would stay to be possessed of one of that wizard's evil spells? Hadn't I seen enough to show me he held company with the powers of darkness?"

Mark was still laughing.

"You needn't take my assertion," continued Rufus, waxing wrathful; "just ask any of the people on your father's estate—ask the fishermen. That was two years ago. His reputation is pretty well established by this time. As I told you, it is called Wizard's Isle altogether."

"And he remains there still? It seems to me I remember a casual remark now in one of my mother's letters, telling me that an old hermit had settled on my favourite island. He must be an artful old fellow at all events. I am quite anxious to make his acquaintance."

"He has plenty of young simpletons for visitors. They go to get their fortunes told, but it is the old woman that does that. She is not quite so grim and morose as the old wizard, but she has got such an eye!"

"So there's a wife for the wizard."

"Oh, no—a kind of housekeeper for his cave."

"So, so. I wonder if she manages to give him much variety out of a larger filled with herbs. Beds of moss can't need much attention."

"Now you are laughing again, Master Mark; but I assure you when you come to see him, this mysterious wizard, you won't believe it is a jest."

"Quite likely not; but then there's no harm in getting a little sport from him. Tell me some more, Rufus. I think it rather un-hermit like for him to have a companion."

"I suppose he needs help about his herbs. He is always digging, or boiling over a pot of coals his queer mixtures, and people often see the old woman pull up the roots. They quarrel awfully, far over so many people have heard them from outside the cave. Many think old Marjorie would gladly leave him, but that he has bound her by some of his wizard spells. But she has evil help herself, or how could she tell fortunes so true as she does? What she tells is almost sure to come to pass. I have heard that she told a young girl once all about her bridal-day, even to her parting with her dear friend when she set out for the church, to which the former would not go.

"She told her to beware of this same friend, as she would cause her a life of misery. She did not heed the warning, and the prophecy became true. The false friend was the means of bringing her to the grave. Surely, the old woman must know more than a common mortal, or she would never have told this. Why, Master Mark, your father himself went there once. He laughed just as you do at my account, and declared he'd test the truth of matters. The old hermit wasn't to be found; but he saw the fortune-teller, and I know she said something awful to him which he couldn't put away with a laugh, for when I rowed him back he was as white as a sail in the sunshine, and his hands were all a-tremble. And to my knowledge he's never been here since; and he never talks about them either. I wouldn't go near them if I were you, Master Mark."

"Ah, Rufus, you took the wrong method if you meant to keep me away from them. You remember my old recklessness. You could not point out a dangerous spot but I was bewitched to investigate it for myself, and now your story has piqued my curiosity, go I must. Besides, I started with the idea of visiting the island, and I shall certainly not relinquish it when the attractions are enhanced by your mysterious hermit. I don't think, however, his ventriloquism will appal me, if he has no more formidable weapon than that."

"Well, young blood must have its way, there's no disputing that," quoth Rufus, shaking his grizzly head ruefully.

"Speed away, then, my beauty, and show us your neatest gait," laughed Mark, tacking again.

Rufus was looking deprecatingly to the little oval island, which seemed like a verdurous bouquet upheld by the arm of a sea nymph, for a long, narrow line of gray rock extended from it far out into the seagreen water.

"Now, if there were a lovely damsel held by their uncanny spell, how knight-like I should feel," continued the young man, his sparkling eye following that of his companion.

"The old wizard has seen us by this time. I'll warrant he has found out every word you have spoken," growled Rufus; "at any rate, he knows it's none of my doing, disturbing him."

"Do you think so? then here goes my introductory salute. Good day, Mr. Wizard! I'm not afraid of you in the least—not of you, nor your companion witch. I defy you both to harm me. I shall outwit your spells, whatever they may be."

"Oh, Master Mark, Master Mark, how could you?" cried Rufus, utterly horrified. "You've drawn their spite upon you in spite of everything. Why won't you believe them as has seen more than double your years? I tell you, it is wise to keep clear of them; they have more power than you dream of, and if the gossips say right, they bear ill-will enough already to your family."

"Pshaw! Rufus, you're an old salt, and have earned the right to superstition, but I shall very soon show you what harmless impostors these bugbears will prove. Where do the visitors usually go? for I suppose it won't do for me to go directly to my shooting without due notice to his wizard majesty."

"Please, Master Mark, don't go at all," pleaded old Rufus, with an earnestness extremely ridiculous in Mark's eyes.

"But, Rufus, I am convinced there is no harm. Your anxiety is as absurd as my mother's, and there is less excuse for it."

Rufus saw the uselessness of farther argument.

"The consequence be on your own head, then, Master Mark. You can't say that I did not warn you."

"Not I; your hands, my worthy Rufus, are clean from the slightest shade of blame. But we shall touch the keel in another moment, and you haven't told me the usual method of proceeding."

"The foolish people go up the path to the spring that fills the hollow where the two hills divide there in the centre of the island. You remember it, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! a picturesque little spot, a charming abode for a maid or nymph, but an old witch—bah! Well, what then? Is there a black cat or a toad, or what not, to act as usher and announce new arrivals?"

Rufus showed by his solemn face what unbecoming levity he considered the young man's merriment.

"I've heard them tell about going. The first they know, they are the old woman's face in the water, just as if it was painted there. That's if she's coming to see them. Sometimes they see nothing, and then they know there's no use in waiting. She won't come that day."

"See her shadow in the water, you mean, as she comes along to them?"

"No, I don't; I mean they see her face; and many's the one has looked and hunted in all directions, but no sign can be found of old Marjorie herself—and when she does come hobbling along it's always in a different direction."

"Your wizard is certainly a man of science," was Mark's laconic comment.

He sprang up as he spoke, and dropped the sail, by a skilful movement of the rudder sending the boat sharply alongside the rocky landing-place. Mark sprang out lightly, and was lifting up the anchor when Rufus drily remarked:

"Leave the anchor, please, Master Mark, if it's all the same to you. I'm going to cruise around in sight of the island. When you want the boat come out here and wave your handkerchief. I'll keep a sharp look-out."

Mark laughed.

"You're afraid to trust yourself near the wizard, after my audacious defiance. Away with you, then, and be sure you make your appearance when I need you, unless, indeed, this Prospero invokes a storm, when you seek your own safety. I'll admit I deserve to be abandoned to my fate. Ah, there is no Miranda, nothing more attractive than an old woman. I can't make a romance of it, if I try my best."

He shouldered his gun, waved a merry salute to the half-admiring, half-hungry old sailor, and went bounding lightly along the rocky strand arm toward the main island, which rose up like the half of an orange, only more conical in shape. But a better simile has been used before—like a bouquet, not the free, loose, flowing outline of the natural one you gather when wandering dreamily along a luxuriant garden bed, but the artificial one you receive from the hot-house and the professional gardener.

CHAPTER II.

MARK SHENSTONE walked coolly along the well-defined pathway, looking around him curiously.

He had left home with the eager yearning to behold again the old familiar haunts of his boyhood which all wanderers experience on return from a lengthy

absence, but this emotion was quite dispersed by the new sensation.

His keen eye ran from object to object to detect any sign of change produced by the presence of the wizard, so much feared and distrusted in the neighbourhood.

But there was none betrayed. Everything looked wilder even than he remembered it; and but for this legible pathway, showing how frequently it was trodden by reverent or careless feet, one would have avowed it was a desolate, uninhabitable place.

A squirrel darted across the path and ran nimbly up the beech tree opposite, and as he turned aside into the undergrowth a brace of snipes suddenly swooped away, almost brushing his head with their hasty wings.

Instinctively the sportsman's hand levelled his gun but with a rueful sigh he checked his eagerness, and slowly lowered it.

"It won't do, I suppose, until I have asked permission of this new ruler who has taken possession of my little island," murmured he, and strode on up the rising pathway.

If he had not known the spot by olden acquaintance the path would have led him to the little spring, which was indeed, as he had said, charming and picturesque enough to have been the shrine of a nymph's oracle.

The island cone seemed here cleft in twain, and had the appearance of two huge mountains welded together by a narrow strip of fertile valley. Shaded, as it was by the steep sides of the hill on either hand, it was always cool and moist, and around the edges of the deep, still, glassy surface of the spring long, feathery sprays of fairy-like moss crept in wonderful luxuriance, while tall clusters of exquisite ferns nodded gracefully on every side.

A line of smooth stones led to the brink, and, smiling at his own thoughts, Mark Shenstone stepped lightly along them, and putting aside the fringing ferns looked down into the black, still pool.

The smile died off instantaneously. He started and turned around, looking sharply about him scrutinizingly in every direction.

All was silence, and no trace was perceptible of human presence except his own.

Tree-top above tree-top, interspersed here and there with gray boulders, draped with vine and tangled briars, rose on either side, and directly overhead a strip of blue, cloud-flecked sky.

He heard the merry twittering of birds, the buzzing of countless insect life, and afar off the surf beating monotonously on the farther side of the island. Once he fancied there came to him the muffled strain of Rufus White's boating song.

Did the old sailor think it would keep up the rash ventures of his courage to hear the voice of a friend from the distance?

He smiled again, but not in the least satirically or presumptuously now, then, turning slowly, he looked down again into this mirror of Nature.

It was no shrivelled, ugly face of crone or beldame, no sombre, ghastly countenance of snowily bearded wizard or hermit, that Mark beheld, and yet there were features as plainly visible upon the dark, glossy surface as if painted upon a canvas.

A sweet young face, almost childish in colouring and outline. What deep, wistful, and yet infinitely tender eyes they were which looked straight up into his! What a charming smile dimpled the very lips, half arch and roguish, half deprecating and ashamed! Waving clusters of curling hair swayed around the white shoulders—and across the forehead, as if lightly tossed there in playful freak, was a crown of some delicate vine.

Mark bent down eagerly, conscious of the growing fascination, but unable to resist.

He smiled at the sweet image. It smiled back again, made a swift, graceful inclination, flashed a wee white hand in arch greeting and vanished.

The young man rubbed his eyes and stood staring blankly at the pool. Was he really bewitched, and after all his vaunted courage and promise of explanation must he go back to Rufus to own himself vanquished and mystified?

It might have been a portrait or picture in some strange fashion reflected upon the water; but that roguish smile, that graceful wave of the hand could not be counterfeited.

He lingered a long time, hoping for its reappearance, then reluctantly turned away and began searching diligently on all sides for a sign of human presence within possible range of vision. He clambered to and fro on all accessible spots, but quite fruitlessly.

Then, tired and a little angry, he returned to the pool.

The charming face was once again reflected there, but changed, and yet none the less lovely because the merry smile had faded, the sweet lips grown wistful

with a touching look of grieved distress, the soft deep eyes grave and troubled, the whole countenance one tremulous appeal for tenderness and compassion.

"Where are you? Speak to me and tell me where I may find you!" said Mark, bending down frantically to the pool.

Only a mournful smile for answer.

It was too ridiculous, but none the less true, that the youth began a frantic pantomime, intended to communicate the idea of his endless devotion to her cause, his persevering, heroic efforts to discover, and save, and comfort this enchanting princess of the isle.

It seemed to him he could see the blushes kindle their beseeching rose on the fair cheeks, the starry splendours slowly creep under the downcast lashes and kindle the beams of gladness in those radiant eyes. At all events, she smiled brightly again, and as he kissed his hands and flung them toward her, half-frightened at her own boldness, she returned the salute, and vanished.

"I must go before I lose my senses," muttered Mark, rising from his knees and taking up his gun again, and slowly leaving the spot. "It is very evident I am not to see the fortune-teller; but may she always send in her stead at my coming such a charming substitute."

Like one in a dream, Mark descended the narrow way to the beach.

He stood there a moment irresolute. An almost irresistible longing impelled him to take another route leading to the brow of the twin hills, and thoroughly investigate the ground there; but after a moment's pondering he murmured:

"Another time will do as well. I will come alone. Old Rufus will be tormenting me if I should attempt it to-day."

As he passed slowly down the rocky ledge he saw a tall figure on the beach, some hundred yards beyond him. A bowed form, bent nearly double, wrapped in a black shawl, with a scarlet hood, from which streamed elfish looks of coarse black hair, the shaking, palsied head almost resting on the stout staff which helped her on her way.

"The fortune-teller," thought Mark. "A weird, uncanny witch indeed!"

She lifted her head as his quick walk toward her sounded crisply on the sand, and stared at him, and in a sharp, shrill voice demanded:

"Why does the heir of Shenstone Manor come to the Wizard's Isle when the wizard is away? It is no place for you, Bagonel! beware of the place, and cease scoffing at mysteries you cannot fathom."

"But, good woman, I have done no harm," replied Mark, in a more conciliatory tone than he might have used had he not seen that beautiful face in the oracle spring. "I paid a visit hither, hoping to hear from you concerning my future fortune. I will cross your palm with a broad piece of silver, if you will tell me now."

The crone mumbled over a few inarticulate words, then, hobbling forward, took his hand in her clammy fingers.

Mark could scarcely repress a shudder at the touch, but he smothered the manifestation of it.

"It has been a fair life thus far, the chasm bridged over with flowers, but the lines are growing mixed, a mysterious grief hangs over you; it is but a cloud your hand may cover now, yet shall it spread till your whole sky is darkened. A fair name, a very fair name is Shenstone—beware though of boasting concerning it, for a word, a whisper, can blacken it with as deadly a venom as the asp left on the snowy bosom of the Egyptian queen."

She laughed fiercely, and threw down his hand.

Mark stood dumb. Her words sounded to him like so much gibberish, and he had given them no heed whatever. Another time he might have haughtily flung back a scornful rejection of them, but, as we have said, the earnest determination to fathom the mystery of that lovely face mirrored in the water made him anxious to conciliate the woman.

"But you have spoken very vaguely," said he, good-naturedly; "pray tell me something farther."

She took his hand again, somewhat reluctantly, and with those sharp, glittering eyes pored over it till it seemed she must have learned every line there.

"Something is coming over the ocean; it will puzzle you sorely; it threatens you with much sorrow and pain. Pshaw! why should I tell you more? Events will bring the knowledge swiftly enough. Go, I am not in the mood for fortune telling."

"Then I shall come again for it," replied Mark, laughingly, and dropped his silver into her hand.

She never stirred after it, until Rufus, obedient to Mark's signal, brought the boat to the beach, and the young man leaped in and pushed off.

Then suddenly the woman flung down the silver, spat upon it, and stamped it fiercely into the sand.

"Shenstone silver!" muttered the fortune teller "I'll not touch the accursed stuff. Let the tide wash it clean, if it can."

Mark was conscious of the sailor's keen eye scanning his face, and busied himself over the management of the boat, and kept his head averted as much as possible.

He was not himself satisfied concerning his impressions of the Wizard's Isle, and not therefore inclined to discuss them with another.

Rufus waited as long as he could, and then exclaimed, with a sort of explosive hom:

"I wonder, Mr Mark, if you're not a-going to tell me what you think now about the wizard and his fortune teller?"

Mark laughed off a little embarrassment.

"Well, Rufus, I can't give you much information. I didn't see the wizard at all. And what the old woman told me was all nonsense, no meaning in it. Any gipsy girl could have done better."

Rufus eyed him nervously.

"Well," said he, slowly, "let me never handle another rope if I don't believe you have come away with a different idea of them than you had before. I'm sorry you didn't see the wizard—that would have finished the business for you."

"Where can we find any birds? I am afraid I shall go home empty-handed now I am driven from my old haunts."

"I reckon there will be a chance for you over on the other shore. Did you go to the Magic Spring, Mister Mark?"

"Yes," replied Mark, bending closer to the tiller; "but I didn't see either wizard or fortune-teller. By the way, does it ever show any other face?"

"I never knew of it; no, I'm certain no one ever told of seeing any other."

Mark wondered why the answer gave him that sensation of relief.

"I believe I am tired, Rufus; I'll give up to you now. I mustn't be too energetic in the commencement."

And he stretched himself indolently upon the seat.

Rufus took his place with alacrity.

The young man drew his straw hat over his eyes, and seemed asleep.

Rufus began whistling merrily, though in a subdued key. Presently he looked over to the prostrate figure.

"I'm pretty sure there's a flock of birds over on the rocks yonder. Shall I put into the little cove, Mister Mark?"

The hat was drawn listlessly aside. Mark glanced that way and yawned.

"On second thoughts, Rufus, I'll give it up for to-day. Steer for home; I'm profoundly tired."

Rufus opened his eyes, and although he kept direct silence outwardly, he mentally reiterated a dozen times:

"The lad has heard something at the Wizard's Isle that has taken the spirit out of him. It was never like him before to turn home with the game in sight. But he's no mind to tell me, I see that."

Not another word was spoken until they reached the point from which they had first started.

Then as the keel grated on the beach Mark said, apologetically:

"I don't think my mother will have cause for alarm at such experience as this, do you, Rufus? Never mind, I shall recall my old enthusiasm yet, and gain the old strength too, I hope. I must go alone next time, then there'll be no chance for me to shirk the work. I shall try the boat again to-morrow, so you needn't put her into the house. I'll unmoor her myself when I want her without the bother to you."

"It's no bother, Mister Mark; and if it were, you know I'm paid for doing it, and it's my proper work," was Rufus's blunt reply.

"I think just as much of not bothering you, for all that, my good fellow," answered Mark.

"Indeed, and no one knows that better than I; sometimes I think maybe I'm too bold. I've been so kindly treated by you all I forget I'm only a servant, and I'm sure I ask your pardon for it, now and always; but it's faithful and well meaning I am through it all; there's nothing but I would do for you, Mister Mark. I hope there's no need of my telling you that."

"None at all, Rufus, my good fellow. So I shall always call upon you in hours of need. You would even visit the wizard, if necessity demanded it, eh, Rufus?"

He shouldered the unused gun with an arch smile flung back to Rufus, and then ascended the grassy terrace and turned into the broad avenue leading through a noble grove of oak trees to Shenstone Manor.

The house was a fine old building, and it seemed a pity the mammoth trees should hide its graceful

proportions so completely from distant view; but, then, as its master declared, it was the more agreeable surprise when one came upon it.

The grounds were kept with that exquisite neatness and assiduous care so natural and indigenous to English country-seats.

Through a clump of evergreens showed the crystal walls of a conservatory, and leading from it were garden beds in brilliant bloom. But the lawn was one smooth, clear sweep of velvet green.

A group were gathered upon the latticed piazza, and Mark turned his steps towards them.

A tall lady, richly dressed and bearing herself with somewhat haughty grace, came down the stone steps eagerly to meet the returned sportsman.

"Why, Mark, what brought you back so soon? Did you repent of your silly plan, and become convinced that it was far wiser to remain comfortably in the house than to be tramping all over the beach after birds?"

"Something like that, my dear mother, or you would not have seen me for many hours yet. All at once my ardour cooled, my boasted strength gave out, so here I am without a single shot, much less a show of game."

"You are a dear good fellow; do put away that gun, and come with us on the verandah. How heated and tired you look. Shall I order you some coffee or wine?"

"Neither, thank you; I'm not tired, only abominably indolent, my most tender mamma. I am quite ashamed of myself, and your attentions make me feel absolutely ridiculous."

"Nonsense! as if there is no better manliness than tugging at an ear, or tramping all over the country, blazing away at innocent birds."

"But innocent birds are extremely well flavoured when served up on the second course," observed a third speaker, coming forward with a smile.

"Ah, of course, Colonel Selwyn. I am not prepared to have an old sportsman like you take sides against me, but I persist in declaring I should rejoice if Mark would never touch a gun. If his father had not insisted upon his being allowed to follow up his boyish taste for sporting, I should have taken care every species of firearms was withheld from him. Think how much time is wasted, how much energy exhausted, what fortunes thrown away upon the profitless pursuit! Not to refer to the countless accidents. Only think of Sir Wharton, and poor young Squire Bentley."

"Sir Wharton had been drinking freely and young Bentley was an abominably careless fellow. It does not follow because they lost their lives that Mark, a steady, sensible young fellow, is to come to an untimely end because he loves to fill his game bag, and bring down a duck on the wing—oh, Mark, my boy?"

And the merry, faced, rollicking old colonel gave Mark a sly poke in the ribs, and burst into a peal of hearty laughter.

"I can't respond very enthusiastically to-day, colonel, because I've been such a dull sportsman, but some other day, under the exhilaration of a plump game bag, I may then do justice to the theme."

"I am sure your daughter will join my side of the question, colonel," replied Mrs. Shenstone, gaily.

"Come here Maggie, and tell me how you enjoy your father's fox-hunting and snipe-shooting and sporting mania."

Maggie Selwyn, a red-cheeked, bright-eyed maiden, the perfect image of rustic health and boydenism, shook back her glossy black curls, and laughed merrily, showing thereby a fine, even set of large but extremely white teeth.

"Oh, Mrs. Shenstone, I do so wish it was the fashion, as it used to be, for the ladies to go too. Don't I envy the old days, when the daughters and wives galloped off with them, 'aloon on wrist! How delightful it must have been!'"

The colonel laughed boisterously at the lady's blank face.

"There, there, Mrs. Shenstone, you've summoned another recruit for our side. I knew your discomfiture was at hand. Maggie is a hoyden, and shares my taste."

"But, child, don't you get anxious about your father when he is off all day on those sporting expeditions? Such terrible accidents are constantly occurring, don't you tremble for his safety?"

The girl opened her black eyes till they were as round as rings.

"I never think of such things. Why, papa has always gone hunting; all my life I have seen him go, and he was never harmed yet. Why, Mrs. Shenstone, my father is an old sportsman, and knows better than to get into mischief."

While the colonel laughed triumphantly Mrs. Shenstone sighed.

"Am I so much more nervous and foolish than all

the rest of the world? I must try to conquer it, but I have an instinctive aversion to a gun. One would almost think the weapon had wrought some great evil with me."

Serle Shenstone had been leaning against a pillar of the piazza, ostensibly busily twisting into the trellis the spray of clambering honeysuckle.

But not a word of this conversation had been lost upon him, and now at these last words of his wife a sudden spasm crossed his face and he shuddered.

(To be continued.)

THE TWO WIVES.

Young Arthur Dunraven, the gay millionaire,
Has a dame for his wife that is youthful and fair;
Her elegant figure, so tastefully dressed,
Seems as plump to our eyes as a pillow unpressed;
She has eyes that can dazzle with luminous light,
Has lips dyed like coral and hands creamy white,
While every line in her form and her face
Has the curve appertaining to beauty and grace.
Yet her husband avers, with a sneer and a grin,
She is uglier far than original sin.

Old Anthony Froebel, the cobbler, 'tis true,
Has a wife who by no means is comely to view;
Her lankness of body mates leanness of limb,
Her irregular features are homely and grim,
Her skin is the hue of her husband's old last,
Her eyes greenish gray, and the right has a cast,
Her harsh, wiry hair knows nor ringlet nor braid—
It looks much like oakum in texture and shade;
Yet Anthony Froebel is eager to say
His dame is as fair as the blossoms in May.

Now how does it happen two women like these
Have such different power those around them to please—

That one should be hated when lovelier far
Than to mariner's eye is some lone, brilliant star,
And the other be worshipped, more hideous yet
Than the gray, warted toad in the damp pathway met?

And why is it clear that the richer man knows
No charm in the wife which in manhood he chose,
While the cobbler looks up to his angular frau
As a being to whom all who see her should bow?

Very beautiful, even her foes must confess,
Is Ethel Dunraven in full evening dress.
As she glides past each group there are many who

gaze
On her figure and face with delight and amaze;
But the power of her spell is in silence alone—
Let her open her lips and the magic has flown;
For the sound of her voice is as shrilly and harsh
As that of the bittern that lives in the marsh,
And the tones as they pierce through their ears in
that hall

Make the flesh of the listeners shudder and crawl.

"Repulsive and coarse" is a phrase far too weak

The appearance of Elizabeth Froebel to speak—
Her figure all angles, all discord her face,
Her manner all awkwardness, void of all grace;
But, nevertheless, when those thick lips unclosed
A fountain of sweet, tinkling melody flows—
Low, musical tones, speaking kindness and love,
Come softly and clear as the coo of a dove;
Whenever, however, that voice may be heard,
To its depths is the heart of each listener stirred.

Has the voice of a woman such power to create
The woe or the joy of the conjugal state?
Do the discords that sensitive tympanums jar
The life of the hearer for evermore mar,
And happiness follow the accents alone
That fall on the ear in a metrical tone?
Lies the gamut of love in the musical scale?
Must language to win us for evermore fail,
Save wedded to accents our hearing receives
Like the chirping of birds or the whispering of
leaves?

No, 'tis not the voice in itself that alone
Such woe or such bliss may confer by a tone,
'Tis the motive that prompts it, the feeling that
fills

Each word that is uttered, that vexes or thrills;
The melody lies in the love that within
Prompts the effort to please and the purpose to
win.

Hence Ethel Dunraven's, though lovely to see,
To the love of their husbands as strangers may be;
While the Elizabeth Froebels, though ugly and
old,

Find the roughest of mates by affection controlled.

T. D. E.

CAPILLARY ATTRACTION.—It was the custom formerly in France to bless the first cutting of the hair, as with the Romans the first shaving day with young men was kept as a festival. Nero placed his

first beard in a jewelled box and dedicated it to Jupiter. Often enemies were reconciled in France by cutting their hair at the same time, and mixing portions of it to form a lock. Donations for the altar were generally accompanied with a lock of the giver's hair. The tonsure, which is still practised by many religious orders, is the symbol of homage. Some councils of Rome direct the clergy to cut their hair, and others to permit it to grow. From the twelfth to the fifteenth century the clergy wore the beard as long as a Greek philosopher's, till the laity following the example, Leo X. ordered the priests and the abbots to shave. Francois I., like the Emperor Hadrian, wore the beard long, to hide a wound, and the hair short to dissimulate a burn, by thus appearing bald. Louis XIV. wore a wig to conceal his wen.

RULES FOR HEIR HUNTING.

Now that the season is getting to its height, will you kindly say a word for us young single gentlemen (by young I mean all fellows under fifty, you know), who are put down in society as highly eligible parties, and are therefore at the mercy of all managing mammas. When fox hunting, as ever, and men congregate in town, then heir hunting sets in with all its usual severity, and match-makers in myriads pursue the cruel sport.

In the park or in the ball-room, at the opera or the theatre, at the Zoo, or at the "drum," the huntswomen assemble with relentless perseverance, and when once the heir is scented little breathing-time is given him—if he be a dancer, but small rest to his feet. Wherever he may turn he finds a pack of marriers in full cry at his heels, and however nimbly he may struggle to escape them he generally falls a victim to his foes.

As the sport appears to me to be increasing in ferocity, and as several of the heirs now fordoomed to be hunted are among my choicest friends, I have ventured to prepare a code of rules and regulations which may somewhat tend to mitigate the terrors of the chase.

1.—No heir shall be hunted by any of his relations, extending in degree to even his Scotch cousins eleven times removed.

2.—Every heir shall have due warning of the spots where he is likely to be hunted, so that he may avoid them if he fancies there is danger that he really will be caught.

3.—Full licence of flirtation shall everywhere be granted him, and free liberty to act as though he were a younger son.

4.—Upon his entering the ball-room no eye-glass shall be raised by any chaperone or dowager for the purpose of inspecting him, and no whisper be permitted about his handsome looks.

5.—The chase shall not be suffered at places of amusement to which the poor heir goes for needful recreation, such as the opera, theatres, the races, and the Row.

6.—Every heir shall be permitted to hand a chair, pick up a handkerchief, fetch a fan, or get an ice, or even to put a shawl on or dance three times with one partner, and present her at next meeting with a tie or guinea bouquet without being held accountable for paying marked attentions, or deemed to be endangering his chance of single life.

7.—Any heir shall be allowed to seek a refuge at his club when he finds a pack of marriers close upon his heels.

8.—In accordance with the game-laws or the laws of the game a croquet lawn shall be considered an heir hunting ground for heirs who venture there at their own risk.

9.—Pic-nics and garden-parties shall also be regarded as open for the chase, it being held that heirs who venture there are perfectly aware of the perils that await them, and are fully competent to take care of themselves.

10.—Private billiard-rooms, however, shall be held as safety places, for ladies, as a rule, are not permitted to assemble there, and it would be cruelly to heirs to take advantage of their innocence and molest them when they fancy they have found a safe retreat.

11.—Any heir shall be permitted to do a bit of park, and may enjoy the privilege of smoking there in peace, provided he wears no bouquet in his button-hole, and abstains from lounging where the ladies chiefly congregate.

12.—Elderly heirs will be expected to exercise their instinct, and to avoid frequenting places such as ball-rooms, and the like, where experience must have taught them the marriers often meet.

If some such rules as these were specially in force there might be more mercy shown to us poor creatures, and the coming of the season might yearly be regarded with less terrible apprehensions than it is at present by.

Sir, Yours,

A HUNTED HEIR.

"Punch's Pocket Book, 1876."



[THE LIGHTKEEPER'S STORY.]

TWICE SAVED.

CHAPTER IV.

THE good woman had, grown brave in the matter of mounting up into the lantern; with steady step she could now ascend the dizzy height and assist in lighting the lamps.

Alcock, who had perfect confidence in her, initiated her into all the mysteries appertaining to the place, so that if he were unavoidably detained on shore, or rendered helpless by illness, she did not fear on the stormiest night to manage the entire machinery.

One day the brother came from some expedition quite ill.

"I have been foreseeing it this long time," he said, with an unsteady voice.

"Foreseeing what, brother?" asked Hetty, anxiously.

"That I should have to tell or die," he answered, moodily, and there he passed.

By his manner the good woman knew that he did not wish to be questioned, so she silently waited for events to take their course.

It was three years from the time that the wrecked men had been thrown upon their hospitality, and Ida was ten years old. In her eyes lay her chief beauty. They were so dark, so very clear and luminous, and capable of such varying expression that it was a wonder, an ever new delight to study them. If she was thoughtful beyond her age, so, when she chose to exercise the power, was she witty and frolicsome.

Aunt Hetty often sighed over her own limited resources as she gazed upon the beautiful creature intent upon some book or puzzling over some unsolvable study.

"Papa is quite ill, Aunt Hetty. He says that you and I must attend to the light. Hadn't we better go now? There's a fog out, and though it is early it will grow dark so soon, you know."

Up they went together. The beautiful revolving flames soon sent their steady radiance out over the ocean.

In a little room, made on purpose for him, just under the light, that he might be near his chief care, Aunt Hetty now went to attend to her brother.

A lamp burnt dimly, suspended from a bracket among the huge beams and cross-bars of iron.

The invalid lay extended upon his narrow couch.

"What shall I do for you, brother?" she asked, tenderly.

"Nothing, only to bring up a little tea. I'm going just as your father did. It's in my heart, the trouble is, and I shall go like a flash when the time comes. Hetty, I want to tell you something; no—not now—not now—but perhaps to-night, if you'll stay with me awhile."

The tea was brought by Ida, and Aunt Hetty sat watching all through the lowering evening, fearing yet longing to hear the secret which she knew was connected with the child she so dearly loved.

It was nearing midnight.

The hoarse roar of the water came fainter up through the distance, yet every dash of the waves could be distinctly heard against the base of the lighthouse.

The invalid opened his eyes as he turned heavily in bed.

"Hetty," he said, slowly, "I've been fearing this time a good many years. 'Twouldn't be of any use, you see, to send for a doctor, for I went to one a long time ago, and he told me just how it was, and when it would be likely to happen. Well, the hour is coming. I've felt the very symptoms he warned me of, and my time is short, very short."

"I hope not, brother," said Hetty, softly, her gray eyes full of tears.

"Yet it is so—it must be so; and if I'd been a good man I wouldn't have it otherwise—truly I wouldn't. But I am a base, bad man, sister."

"Surely not, brother."

"It is true. Didn't I desert my parents when I should have been a stay to them? And now—now I must tell you something for which, if you hear the whole, you must despise me."

Hetty moved her white lips, but no sound came from them.

"Hetty, that child is not mine; I've deceived you Hetty. She is not mine, and she knows it; but I sealed her lips; she dare not say only what I wish her to. Don't snuff the candle," he added, as his sister made a motion towards the light. "I'd rather it would be dark. The child's mother, you see, was washed ashore. Ida was bound to her. The little one was just alive. The woman had secured some jewels and bank notes to her person, I've got them all now, safe, locked away. I haven't dared to use them, hardly to look at them. The diamonds must be worth thousands of pounds, and I intended to find out her people in England, and return the child, the jewels and the money. But I got to love her more than my own soul—more than Heaven, seeing that I did not love Heaven enough to do right. My wife, too, became very fond of her. We were tempted, and we yielded.

People I suppose got to hear of it in time, but they didn't wonder much; and not seeing any of us, but seldom, at last it became quite natural to consider the child ours. In fact, there are some who don't know but she is my own child to this day."

"Is that all, brother?" asked his sister, striving to keep calm.

"No, I wish it was," he said, "I had another struggle in which I yielded—sorry am I to say it—to the powers of darkness. You remember the name of that man I saved, whom you nursed here?"

"Leicester?" said Aunt Hetty.

"That was the name on that woman's clothes—Ada Leicester—and I know that he was the husband of that woman."

"Oh, brother, brother!" escaped the pale lips of the woman, half-reproachfully.

"I shouldn't wonder if you hated me," he said.

"Heaven forbid," was the reply. "Hate you? Heaven forbid! May Heaven have mercy on you is my earnest prayer. I am sorry for you, my brother; but never speak of hate, and you in the situation you are this moment. It is not too late; you wish me to make restitution?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" he murmured.

"And you have provided for another keeper?" she continued, sighing as she spoke.

"Yes, all that has been attended to. I have made you my successor."

"Me?—me? Oh, impossible, brother! Such a thing was never known," she said, quite alarmed.

"Such a thing will be known then," he said, firmly.

"I appointed you because there is no man to whom I would so soon entrust it. That is why I have taken such pains to teach you all about the lamps. There is an old man on the island above—a good old man—who, for food and lodgment, will undertake the heavier work of the night. I have told him so, and I know you have too good sense to see any impropriety in the matter. You have no home, this will be a permanent home for you, and you can be content doing a deed of mercy continually. It's your way to like to do good to folks, and so then you'll be happy."

"Oh, brother!" sobbed the good woman, quite overcome, "think how many lives you have saved. Surely Heaven will be merciful."

"Yes, there was Sandy. I fished him up when I wasn't only fourteen—a slip of a boy—and there was a merchant—I was twenty-four then. Counting all, I've brought twelve people to life, as I might say; but that was a mere act of humanity, you see—nothing to be blessed for, as I know of."

"Oh, my dear brother, you have rarely repented,

Recommend yourself to Heaven's mercy, and, if you should not die, oh, then strive to do right whatever you do."

The sick man pointed to an iron box set in the wall and then to a key on the table. A moment after she bent over him, and so sudden had Death come that he had not altered yet the freshness of his features.

But she knew he was gone. She nerved herself to watch till morning, and then turned Ida's dimpling smiles into sad tears by the announcement that the lightkeeper had died in the night.

The child's grief was passionate, but she had stood in fear of the man she called father, for he had not yet appeared to her in his natural character, being always under restraint, though he loved her with an idolatrous worship.

Nor yet did Aunt Hetty venture to tell the child the strange destiny that probably lay before her, but waited till the old man was buried, and the two sat down, lonely, though together.

CHAPTER V.

It was some time before Aunt Hetty could nerve herself to speak to the child of what her brother had told her. When she did Ida wept for a while uncontrollably.

"I wanted to tell you what I remembered," she said, "but I knew it would displease him. And what are you going to do with me, dear aunt? Don't send me away—at least go with me, because I love you so."

Aunt Hetty explained to her how she had been left in charge of the light, and dared not put aside the responsibility—and the information affected her violently—that the gentleman and his son who had so much interest in her were, probably, her own father and brother.

The good woman immediately set about restoring the child to her father. She ascertained the value of the jewels and the bank notes now in her possession, and found them to amount, as her brother had calculated, to several thousands.

Strange to say, however, the letters sent to England containing information so important were never answered, and the advertisements brought forth no results.

"She shall, at any rate, have the benefit of the best instruction," said good Aunt Hetty, and forthwith set herself to procuring a wardrobe suited to Ida's improved circumstances.

The little girl was sent from her sea home to a far-famed institution; and as the years wore on the child grew gracefully and naturally into the woman. Every year she spent some time with her aunt, as she still continued to call her, and finally gave up the hope of ever being claimed from her present state of isolation.

One day, when Ida was sixteen, and busily at study in her room with a classmate, the postman brought a letter which summoned her from school. It was written by the old man who assisted Miss Hetty in taking charge of the lighthouse, and ran thus:

"DEAR MISS IDA.—When you see this won't you cum hom? We've had an awful wrack, and the excitement has made your ill. She lies confined to her bed, and I think you'd better be here, 'cause I can't seem to do nothin'." Yurs and so for."

"HREEKIAN LONG."

Ida felt it her duty to return immediately. It seemed really to be her destiny to be associated in some way with wrecks and perils.

In less than two days she stood upon the beach ready to be rowed over to the lighthouse.

The storm had subsided only the day before, and the swell of the surf seemed dangerous to inexperienced eyes, but Ida felt herself safe in the care of the experienced old boatman of the lighthouse.

"Was the wreck a very bad one, James?" she asked.

"Not a very," was the reply. "There were some people lost, but the most were saved, and the ship was got off this morning high tide, not so much damaged as was thought."

"Any of the wrecked people at the lighthouse, James?"

"Yes, miss, one—a foreign-looking young man; but Miss Hetty's been too ill to see him or speak to him—she was taken dreadfully ill in the first of the storm. I thought she would die. I was at the lighthouse, you see; we had three boats there."

"A young man—a foreign-looking young man?" and Ida's heart palpitated and her cheek flushed. "Do you mean an Englishman, James?"

There was a half-formed hope in her heart.

"Oh, no; much darker and more foreign-looking than that—very much like a Spaniard, I should think, miss."

The hope died out—they had reached the lighthouse.

The young man alluded to had been watching the boat, as it neared, from a window of the keeping-room. Now he drew back, for Ida herself was entering the room. With a grave expression she greeted him, unable to take in his appearance as he stood with his back to the light, and passed quickly into the room where Aunt Hetty lay. She was really very ill, and quite rejoiced to see the sweet face that had so often blessed and lighted her solitude. In less than an hour so comfortable had Ida made all things, that Aunt Hetty declared herself almost well; but as a low, nervous fever was in full progress that was not possible.

Seeing her at last sweetly sleeping while the fever was passing, Ida ventured to go out into the keeping-room, that she might look after the comfort of their guest. They met again face to face, and in the broad light.

"Do you not recognize me?" he said, brushing his hair from a swarthy brow and showing a line of English fairness, "but—I see—and I thank you—I see you wear the ring I gave you."

All this was uttered in a low, quiet tone, while his eyes feasted on the surpassing loveliness of the young girl. She meantime felt dizzy, confused, bewildered. Was this the same? Was this her brother? Why, then, did he not claim her? But perhaps he did not know.

He stepped forward and took her hands.

"We did not hear till within six months," he said, as if answering to her very thought. "We have been in India—father and I—and he sent me home for you."

"Then it is my brother!—then you believe me to be your sister?" she exclaimed, pale with emotion, and leaning forward.

He seemed strangely moved. Yielding to an uncontrollable impulse, he bent his lips to her forehead—then, still holding her hand, he led her to a seat.

"My dear young lady," he said, "you know not how happy it makes me to hear that sweet word from your lips. But this pleasure I must, alas! forego. I am not your brother."

She started violently, and released her hand.

"What, then, am I to understand?" she questioned, her face growing crimson as it had before turned pale.

"There is no doubt, Miss Leicester—for I must call you by your father's name—there is no doubt of the authenticity of your claim upon a parent now living, and who for eight blessed years I have called father. But, in truth, I am no relative—only adopted, and honoured by his love. I am the son of a very dear friend of your mother. Both my parents dying soon after his wife was so unfortunately lost, he took me to his home and heart, and I have repaid him in love, if in nothing else. I worship him. Oh, to be really the child of so great a man, so noble a gentleman, must indeed be something to feel as nobly thankful for. You do not know him. He was in India when your mother took you, then three years old, he having been gone a year, to visit this country in company with the English consul and his family. But let me say here that his peer cannot be found in England, or the world. What more could I say?"

The bright, dark face of the stranger glowed upon Ida—or we should call her Eleanor—as he pronounced these words.

She was still too much confused—overwhelmed—to think steadily; but in the midst of it all she did see how supremely handsome was the young man before her, and who had proved to be not her brother.

"I was doomed, you see," he continued, "to be thrown upon your hospitality in a way most romantic but not such as I should have sought. This place seems to possess a certain fatality. You were wrecked here, your mother was drowned, your father barely escaped with his life, and behold me, twice saved on the same spot. Eleanor, perhaps my life has been spared for some good purpose."

The look with which he regarded her set her heart to throbbing again.

"It may seem strange to you," he went on to say, "that the letters and notices regarding yourself were not seen by us; but I will show you that it was unavoidable. My father—pardon me, I must still continue to call him so—and myself have travelled ever since, without intermission—have been for the last five years in India, where Mrs. Leicester had a brother who was an old resident. The letters were forwarded hither and thither, as my father left no business agent, much to his regret since, and must have been lost. The advertisements did not happen to be seen by the right parties. There is a brief and simple statement. I left England with directions to bring you, and, if it was your wish, also the man you called father—who would be suitably provided for—and your aunt. She was to come back with us,

at all events, as of course you would wish a companion and attendant of your own sex. So you see, Miss Eleanor," he added, "the programme is made out. I hope, to your liking."

It was not till three months after that a vessel sailed from the harbour adjacent, bearing on board Eleanor Leicester and her Aunt Hetty, who, from the love she bore "her darling," consented to leave the lighthouse, especially as she was growing too infirm to undertake duties so onerous.

The young attendant proved himself as brotherly as he dared, and something more. The moonlight walks taken upon deck—the innocent blushes on one side and the gentle attention on the other proved that. Nor was good Aunt Hetty surprised to find her "niece" quietly sobbing with joy on her shoulder one night and telling brokenly what an important question had been put to her.

"And wouldn't you tell him yes, aunt?" she asked, blushing.

"I think I would, after I had seen my father, dear," replied that prudent lady.

It is needless to tell the rest.

There was a happy home in England waiting for the pet of the lighthouse, and a heart full to the brim with hope and love long deferred. And not long after—not very long—there was a bridal, on which occasion the groom playfully whispered:

"I told you I had been twice saved for some good purpose; and, indeed, I think now it was for an excellent good—a most precious purpose—that of calling you my wife!"

THE END.

SCIENCE.

A NATIVE of Amsterdam, M. Jansz, professes to have discovered a method by which a vessel, even if built of iron, or iron-plated, like a man-of-war, can be effectively steered independently of the magnetism of the earth and the deviation caused by the ship's iron. He suspends his instrument in a Cardanus apparatus, protected by indiarubber.

PAINT FOR WINDOW.—Mix with genuine white lead, boiled oil or varnish, and a small quantity of patent driers (no turps, which hardens for the time, being a volatile oil, and therefore objectionable in this case); paint this mixture over the glass thinly, and stipple it. If you have not a proper brush, make a large pledget of cotton wool or tow and cover it with a clean bit of lined rag, and quickly dab it over the paint.

OPTICAL EXPERIMENT.—Professor F. E. Nipher suggests the following optical experiment. Observe a white cloud through a plate of red glass with one and through green glass with the other eye. After some moments transfer both eyes to the red glass, opening and closing each eye alternately. The strengthening of the red colour in the eye, fatigued by its complementary green, is very striking.

INSTANTANEOUS BLEACHING FLUID.—In 50 parts of water heated to 190 deg. or 212 deg. Fahr. are introduced successively mother-of-pearl, 8½ oz; indigo, 0.75 grains; cochineal, 0.5 grains; chloride of lime, 150 grains; soda crystals, 150 grains; potash, 150 grains. Boil for half an hour, and the preparation is ready for use. The inventor, M. Boisselier, says:—"The mother-of-pearl gives softness, lustre, suppleness, etc., and gives to hemp the feel of cashmere; the indigo gives a slight azure tint, the cochineal adds brightness, the chloride effects the bleaching, the soda washes and brushes, and the potash removes all grease."

WEAR OF COINS.—The manner in which coins sometimes lose weight by friction is curiously illustrated by a recent statement concerning the weighing of sovereigns at the Bank of England. It occasionally happens that a box is sent to Scotland containing five thousand pounds sterling in sovereigns, and is returned to the bank unopened. Before being sent the coins are all duly weighed and found to be of full weight, but some of them come back lighter than they went, in consequence of the friction of the journey, which has worn them away. There will usually be about eight of these light-weight sovereigns in the box, representing a total loss in value of only sixteen pence.

NEW VESSELS.—A number of vessels are now in hand in Chatham Dockyard, either being built or fitted. Among the former which are now making notable advance, are the "Euryalus," 14, iron corvette, cased with wood, 3,906 tons, 5,250 horse power, and the "Garnet," and the "Cormorant," both composite sloops, all occupying building slips. The "Euryalus" has been on the stocks about two years, and is well forward. From her style of construction and powerful engines it is expected that

this ship will prove to be one of the fastest in the Navy. She is of great length—so long, indeed, that a portion of the front of the ship she occupies has had to be removed to give her space. The "Garnet" has also made good progress, and, although the "Cormorant" was commenced only a few months since, she is also in a good state, her frames, etc., having been put together with great rapidity. Besides these comparatively small vessels, the great ironclad "Temeraire" is being built in a dock at Chatham.

THE DARNING MACHINE.—Imagine, ye mothers of large families, who ruefully contemplate dilapidated socks by the dozen, after the week's washing, with visions of strained eyes and tired backs floating across your minds, imagine a little apparatus infinitely more simple than the sewing machine, which repairs the hugest darn in much less time than we can describe the operation, and far more neatly than you can do it with all your years of practice. This is what it is. Two small plates, one stationary and the other movable, are placed one above the other. The faces are corrugated, and between them the "holey" portion of the stocking is laid. Twelve long eye-pointed needles are arranged side by side in a frame, which last is carried forward so that the needles penetrate opposite edges of the hole, passing in the corrugations between the plates. Hinged just in front of the plate is an upright bar, and on this is a crosspiece carrying twelve knobs. The yarn is secured to an end knob, and then, with a bit of flat wire, pushed through the needle eyes. Then the loop between each needle is caught by the hand and hooked over the opposite knob so that each needle carries really two threads. Now the needles are carried back to their first position, and in so doing they draw the threads, which slip off the knobs through the edges of the fabric. A little push forward again brings the sharp rear-edges of the needle eye against the threads, cutting all at once. This is repeated until the darn is finished, and beautifully finished it is. The inventor is Mr. O. S. Hooper, and we predict for him the blessings of the entire feminine community.

FRENCH POLISHING.

POSSIBLY some of our readers, who are amateur turners, have been puzzled after turning an article, such as egg-cup, snuff-box, cotton reel stand, etc., how to finish them off in a suitable manner—in fact, French polish them. Now, it must not be expected the amateur, who perhaps has never seen the operation of polishing in the lathe, is going to turn out equal work with the professed turner, but this I know from past experience, that amateurs may wonderfully improve the appearance of such work if the following instructions be carried out (I wish it to be borne in mind I never put in print but what I know from my own experience, except I state such to be the case): In a clean bottle put one half-gill French polish; in bottle No. 2 put one half-gill French polish, add $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. dragon's blood; in bottle No. 3 put half-gill French polish, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of gas black; in bottle No. 4 put half-gill methylated spirits; in bottle No. 5 half-gill pure linseed oil; in bottle No. 6 half-gill best glaze. These six bottles will suffice for nearly any kind of work the amateur may desire to polish.

No. 1 Bottle.—Clean French polish, for articles which do not require to be darkened, excepting such as may be given by the colour of the polish.

No. 2 Bottle.—Red polish, for articles which may be darkened with advantage, such as beech or birch, to represent mahogany or mahogany to match work that has been polished some time previous. It must be understood that polished goods darken with age, consequently, to match dark polish must be used.

No. 3 Bottle.—Black polish, for ebony or ebonized wood.

No. 4 Bottle.—Spirits for finishing off.

No. 5 Bottle.—Linseed oil.

No. 6 Bottle.—Glaze, a very useful spirit varnish, is used to put a finish on work, which is either common work or work not accessible to the rubber. These six bottles should be labelled and kept free from dust, ready for use. By-the-by, corks should not be used for polish or varnish, as they stick and cause trouble. Turn a wood plug to fit bottle. When the polish is not in use, cover and tie down with a piece of wash-leather.

TO FRENCH POLISH IN THE LATHE.—The article being well papered, take a piece of old flannel—the larger the article the larger the rubber. Moisten linseed oil, and just a dab of plaster of Paris, if for mahogany or any light wood, not otherwise, will rub the article while it revolves in the lathe. Bear in mind the article must not revolve very fast—about a third the usual speed.

TO DETERMINE WHERE WATER IS.—A gentle-

man related his experience in this matter. A man in his employ, in order to ascertain where he ought to dig to obtain water, soaked, got a stone and buried it over night in the ground, next to the harp. In the morning he found it quite moist, but not sufficiently so to suit his fancy. Next night he tried it in another spot, and it was found very wet on the following morning. "There," said he, "you will find water not many feet deep, and plenty of it." Sure enough, in a few days' digging, he confirmed his prediction, notwithstanding the jeers of the workmen, finding a vein which filled the well to overflowing, and rendered it extremely difficult to bail out the water so as to stone it. The philosophy of the operation seems to be that as the great evaporation takes place from the surface of the earth during the night, water rises up from the depths below to supply the loss, and accumulates in the vicinity of the stone, often making quite a puddle.

TRANSPARENCIES FOR THE MAGIC LANTERN.

AT this season of the year many persons who possess ordinary photographic apparatus would like to take transparencies for the magic lantern, if they could do so without a copying camera, without a dry process, without toning, and without intensification.

Mr. H. Harrison has given some directions for such a proceeding in the columns of a contemporary. He says:

I have practically worked a process, and taken many pictures by it, wherein all these desirable points are attained at the same time. As it is nothing more than the ordinary wet process, with a slight alteration in the collodion and developer ordinarily used, it will very probably be found of commercial value to some of the readers of these lines.

The fact on which the process is based may be stated in a very few words. A developer consisting of pyrogallol and citric acids is known to favour the production of bluish-black deposits in the wet process, but I have chanced to notice that the salts in the collodion also influence the colour of the deposit. When the collodion contains an unusually large proportion of bromide of cadmium, the colour of the deposit produced by the above developer is much improved, and is in every way suitable for transparencies without any toning whatever. Where the deposit is thick it is of a pure black colour, and where it is thin it is of a blue-black colour—in fact just the right tone to look well when the pictures are thrown on a screen by a magic lantern. Such pictures are admirably suited for colouring, because there is no brown or red tone present to interfere with the purity of the colours laid on by the brush of the painter. My experience in this matter extends only to cadmium collodions, which are now very plentiful in the market. I do not know whether other bases would give the same tones.

The great difficulty of getting the right tone and depth by the first application of the developer having been overcome in this very simple manner, all that remains to be done is to show how to work the process with the greatest economy of time and materials. Now that I am "up" in the process, I much prefer the work of printing a few dozen transparencies upon glass rather than copying the negatives upon paper, and the pictures are of considerably more value and beauty.

A bottle of good commercial bromo-iodized cadmium portrait collodion having been purchased, it may be tried at once with the above developer, to see whether the tone is such as pleases the purchaser, cyanide of potassium being used for fixing. By reflected light the colour is always bad, but that does not matter for the magic lantern. To improve the tone about three grains of bromide of cadmium crystals should be added to each ounce of collodion, but then a stronger bath will be required than before.

The collodion, treated as just mentioned, should have a few drops of strong solution of iodine in absolute alcohol added, till it becomes of a straw-yellow colour, in order to facilitate the production of transparencies absolutely free from fog. The bath should be of a very pure nitrate of silver—strength, say, forty-five grains to the ounce—and be slightly acidified with citric acid. A second bath is necessary, made by diluting down some of the first bath solution till its strength is only twenty grains to the ounce. The plate is sensitized in the first bath, in which it should remain at least six minutes when the collodion contains so much bromide, and then it should be dipped for a minute in the weaker bath. Supposing the strong bath were used alone, the transparencies would become much too intense on the application of the developer. The second bath is an advantage in point of economy, because the drippings from the wet plate are less rich in silver than would otherwise be the case.

The picture is taken by direct printing by artificial light, the negative being kept from absolute contact with the wet plate by a few folds of blotting-paper between two of the opposite edges of the plates. The artificial light should be small and bright, a paraffin flame from a very large-sized wick and burner being much the best. The flame should not be more than half or three-quarters of an inch high, its thin and not its broad surface being turned towards the negative. By thus reducing the flame as viewed from the negative to a small, thin, intensely-brilliant line of light, blurring by parallax is avoided. The printing may be done at a distance of eighteen or twenty-four inches from the flame; and the negative must be quite motionless during the exposure, or blurring will result, because of the separation between the two plates. Then the picture has to be developed and fixed.

In this way it is easy to print a few pictures by holding the plates steadily with the fingers during the exposure, which may vary from one to three minutes according to circumstances. But when doing the work on a commercial scale this loss of time during the exposure cannot be tolerated, as the operator might be preparing other plates were his hands free; therefore, a frame for holding the plates during exposure has to be devised.

The intensity of the picture may be varied at will by altering the strength of the second silver bath, and by varying the time of development; a second or two more or less development makes a vast difference in the intensity of the resulting transparency.

When well washed, transparencies taken by this process should make very durable pictures, no bi-chloride of mercury having been used to tone them, or hyposulphite of soda to fix them. Traces of either of these salts left in a collodion film predispose greatly to perishability.

WORDS THAT ALWAYS TOUCH US.

THEY occur in so many letters addressed to us, and still we can never read them without emotion. The words are these: "My mother died when I was a child." A lot so common and yet so hard, for a child to start on the perilous road through this life with no mother's hand to guide it, no mother's voice to warn against the dangers, the pitfalls, which beset on every hand.

There is no grander charity than that which provides so liberally for orphan children. At the same time there can hardly be a more melancholy sight than that presented by the long processions of little boys and girls that emerge from the palatial edifices erected and maintained at the public expense for the accommodation of orphans. We never look upon them without a feeling of ineffable sadness that the one great want, the greatest want of all, of these little children is the want of a mother. "My mother died when I was a child" is one of the saddest of events in any human life.

GEORGE STEPHENSON.—A crowded public meeting was recently held at Chesterfield, under the presidency of the Duke of Devonshire, K.G., Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire, to raise funds to build a public hall in memory of George Stephenson, the engineer, who lived many years at Chesterfield and is buried in one of the churches of that town. The hall, it is stated, is to be devoted as a home for the various literary, educational and scientific institutions of the Derbyshire coalfield, of which Chesterfield is the natural centre. About 6,000l. was subscribed.

CHARACTER GROWS.—From the moment a babe begins to notice surrounding objects his character is under process of formation. Day by day, through infancy and childhood, here a little and there a little, character grows with the growth and strengthens with the strength, until, good or bad, it becomes almost a coat of mail. Look at a model man of business—prompt, reliable, conscientious, cool and cautious, yet clear-headed and energetic. When do you suppose he developed all the admirable qualities? When he was a boy. Let us see the way in which a boy of ten years gets up in the morning, works, plays, studies, and we will tell you just about what kind of a man he will make. The boy who is late at the breakfast-table, late at school—who never does anything at the right time, stands a poor chance to be a prompt man. The boy who half washes his face half does his tasks, forgets half his errands, half learns his lessons, will never make a thorough man. The boy who neglects his duties, be they ever so small, and then excuses himself by saying, "Oh, I forgot! I didn't think!" will never be a reliable man. And the boy who finds pleasure in the pain and suffering of weaker things will never be a noble, generous, kindly man—a real gentleman.

THE DRAMA.

"OUR BOYS" AT THE VAUDEVILLE.

FAR from showing any signs of literary exhaustion, Mr. Henry J. Byron, who must have written full three times as many dramatic pieces as there are years to his age, has produced in "Our Boys" a masterpiece in comic—we may say humorous, as there is a great deal in the comedy which should be described as pathos of the truest and simplest kind—writing. The essentials of true comedy have often been discussed, but they may be set down in the words of Foote, who, with his characteristic terseness, pronounced upon the subject, which, with many others connected with the Drama, was a vexed one in his period: "Comedy I define to be an exact representation of the peculiar manners of that people among whom it happens to be performed; a faithful imitation of singular absurdities, particular follies, which are openly produced, as criminals are publicly punished, for the correction of individuals, and as an example to the whole community."

Accepting Foote—who was a clever comedy and farce writer and an admirable actor—as an authority, we must pronounce that "Our Boys" possesses all the requirements of a good comedy, and that Mr. Byron has profited by his vast experience of stage and histrionic effects to produce a pure, sharp and clear-cut imitation of the follies and of some of the virtues of that chaotic mass, modern society. In these days there is no little of honour due to the successful man who resists the inducements of money and a valueless fame to pander to the tastes of the ignorant and tickle the ears of the groundlings. Mr. Byron makes all laugh and gives no cause to the judicious for grief. If all the rust of his long file of farces, comedies and burlesques die, as assuredly some of them will, we prophesy that "Our Boys" will live and delight generation after generation when new playwrights shall have arisen and new manners have found a place.

The plot of "Our Boys" is not intricate. "Our Boys" are Talbot Champneys and Charles Middlewick: the one, as his name would indicate, the son of an aristocrat, Sir Geoffrey Champneys, the other the son of Perkin Middlewick, an illiterate retired butlerman, who though he has left his shop in Southwark in the body still clings to it in the spirit.

At the moment when the curtain rises we find Sir Geoffrey at the butlerman's country house, awaiting the arrival of the two boys, who have been making together the grand Continental tour.

Sir Geoffrey is all polished and pompos anxiety to see the acion of the house of Champneys, who he proudly expects will discover all the virtues and talents under the sun. Mr. Perkin Middlewick is also in a great state of expectation and anticipatory excitement. He has received long letters from his dear boy Charles and has every reason to believe him to be worthy of his affection and pride.

The boys enter. Talbot is a gentlemanly numbskull, who terms Italy an old lumber shop and every place but Paris a bore. Charles is an ardent, well-read young fellow, as gentlemanly as his companion, and has enjoyed his Continental trip as much as it is possible for an intelligent boy to do.

Sir Geoffrey is rather downcast, and Mr. Perkin Middlewick delighted with his individual sample of "Our Boys," and both express themselves after their kind, the one in pompous and refined soliloquy, the other in ungrammatical but genuine self-gratulation. Towards the end of the scene Sir Geoffrey tells Talbot that he wishes him to marry a certain heiress, Violet Melrose, who, with her cousin, is stopping with their guardian, Sir Geoffrey Champneys.

Talbot, before he has seen the heiress, is repugnant to the idea of being married offhand and disposed of like a piece of merchandise, and replies to his father's expression of a fond hope that he will be obedient with a—

"Marry Violet Melrose! Ah! let's see her first!"

Then there enter the two young ladies, Violet and Mary, and Violet starts as she recognizes in Charles an acquaintance she had made in Germany. He comes forward and explains that he was travelling under a false name to avoid the consequences of a boyish squabble with a German student, and before he has time to give her his own name and prepare her for his genuine but rough-mannered, illiterate parent Sir Geoffrey enters, and is presented by Talbot. A loud voice is heard murdering the Queen's English and sounding false "h's," and Perkin Middlewick enters. The scene closes as Charles, with

mingled courage and misery, lays his hand on the butlerman's shoulder and introduces him to the refined Violet Melrose as "my father."

The next act takes place in the baronet's house, where Perkin Middlewick and Charles are on a visit. All has gone—as is usual with love—the wrong way. The baronet makes it a daily and hourly point to insult his guest, the butlerman, who remains only to please his dear boy. Violet thinks that Charles has deceived her, and treats his father with disdain and him with studied coldness, and Talbot immediately falls in love with Mary, the wrong girl.

The complications and confusion which this state of things brings about are admirably worked out until they terminate in the point where the two pair of lovers come to an understanding and firmly decline to obey the furious parents, who insist that there shall be no marriage or giving in marriage unless they have the matchmaking. Sir Geoffrey casts off Talbot for engaging himself to Mary, the cousin without money, and Mr. Middlewick discards Charles for desiring to marry "the proud, stuck-up gal" who had treated him so disdainfully. In the next act we see the two young men, still fast and firm friends, in a miserable garret, and easily conjecture the state of their finances by the frugal character of the breakfast which still remains on the table. Though they have nearly starved, have been sick and sorry, they are still firm, and Sir Geoffrey's sister, who has discovered them and comes in while they are absent, finds from the maid-servant that Charles, who has nursed Talbot through a dangerous illness, is rapidly falling into bad health himself.

Sir Geoffrey's sister, leaving her bonnet on a chair, takes a chicken to the kitchen to cook for the two boys, and there enter the two fathers, who have by some means discovered their sons' hiding-place, and come to persuade them to return. All is promising to go well when a third knock is heard at the door, the servant hurries Sir Geoffrey and Perkin Middlewick into hiding, and the two girls enter. They also have tracked their lovers, and all is promising to go well when Violet discovers the bonnet.

Suspicious airs, which are heightened by the maid-servant's firm refusal to allow them to enter the boys' rooms, and when Talbot and Charles enter, which they do in the moment, the two girls accuse them of their infidelity, and retreat with fitting indignation.

Then reappear the fathers, and a powerful scene ensues, in which the two boys turn the tables by presenting their respective parents with their hats as a quiet hint of a wish for their absence. In the midst of the two parents' reproaches Sir Geoffrey's sister re-enters with the fowl, there is a mutual explanation, and, upon the return of Violet and Mary, a satisfactory settlement of past and future differences.

Such is a bare outline of a plot which, though simple in the extreme, serves as the peg whereon Mr. Byron hangs a wonderfully effective sketch of men and manners.

Mr. William Farrer, as Sir Geoffrey, hit off the peculiarities and mannerisms of the high-bred, insolent aristocrat with accuracy and force. Mr. Thorne played Talbot with admirable carefulness and truth, and Mr. Charles Sugden gave to the character of his namesake a bold, boyish candour which rendered it all it should be. But of the male dramatic persons, Mr. David James must come in for the largest share of praise. Mr. Perkin Middlewick in his hands becomes an individual whom we at one and the same time laugh at, respect and love. His very blunders in grammar and manner win our affection and the louder his "h's" grow the more we laugh at and esteem him.

With what regret we look upon the many years during which Mr. David James wasted his undoubted powers upon weak-minded and foolish burlesque! If he had only known it, in such characters as Perkin Middlewick there lay hid his great opportunities.

Violet Melrose and Mary found charming representatives in Miss Kate Bishop and Miss Amy Roselle. The selfwounding pride of the one and delicious candour of the other were well portrayed and brought out. The other parts were well filled, and the acting of "Our Boys" is worthy of the high character of the comedy itself. To those of our readers who have not yet seen Mr. Byron's masterpiece we would say "Stay not upon the order of your going, but go."

OPERA-BOUFFE AT THE ROYALTY.

MR. CHARLES MORTON has thought it wise to revive the now almost too well known "La Fille de Madame Angot," at the little theatre in Soho, and as we suppose done all that he considered necessary for the popular opera-bouffe by engaging Mdle Cornelle D'Anka and Madame Pauline Rita for the parts of Mdle. Lange and Clarette Angot.

With the exception of these two ladies, the first of whom has no idea of acting, and the latter mis-

takes vulgarity for wit and humour, there is no one in the cast of sufficient strength to produce a fair representation of the bouffe. The chorus does its best, but its best is not good, and Mr. Fred Sullivan—a capital actor and singer, but entirely unsuited to this line—does the most he can with Pomponet.

Mr. Knight Aston proves a singularly inefficient Ange Pitou and there is only a tolerable conspirators' chorus. If it were our province to criticize the dresses, we should have nothing but praise for Mdle. Cornelle D'Anka's superb costume of white silk and embroidery, and of her magnificent diamonds. But at the theatre we expect to be amused and edified—amused at least; we gained neither pleasure nor instruction from "La Fille de Madame Angot" at the Royalty. The opera-bouffe was followed by Arthur Sullivan's cantata "Trial by Jury," one of the cleverest and most original of efforts. The music is light and effective, the words—they are by W. T. Gilbert—gravely humorous and suitable, and the principal characters act and sing admirably. Mr. Fred Sullivan is quite at home as the judge and renders the song of the evening with immense effect. "Trial by Jury" is decidedly worth hearing, and once heard cannot fail to be remembered.

RUTH'S FLIRTATION.

BARON Ruth Pennington accepted Dr. Howard as he had certainly flirted with Ralph Barlow, and he had some reason to be angry and indignant, but he should have been man enough to let the girl alone, and cease from absurd and unavailing reproaches.

However, he was not, and day by day, hour by hour, Ruth lived in dread of him, never knowing when she might meet his scowling face in the village street, or what sweet hour he might poison with those angry accusations which were all the more bitter for being in a measure true.

However, Ruth's friends upheld her, for Harry Howard was a fine fellow, whose antecedents every one knew—his father the favourite physician of the place before him, his married sister, Mrs. Marchmont, the being who dazzled their eyes with bonnets and dresses absolutely just from Paris, while old Mrs. Howard was the Lady Beautiful of the place, dispensed flannels to the poor, sought out children going to the dogs for want of education, and gave them bread and schooling, and headed contributions for superannuated clergymen and widows who had seen better days.

A really respected family were the Howards, and Ralph Barlow was just no one knew who—a fellow who seemed to have money enough, but who for all that was without any introduction whatever. Handsome, too, but not the man people wanted to see daunting after their girls, and when Ruth had that flirtation with him she led a terrible life at home.

No girl likes to be scolded and preached to and threatened by those who are her guardians, and doubtless this influenced Ruth no little; and now all was so smooth and easy; and, like most grave men, Dr. Howard had more in him than appeared on the surface, and made a fonder and more attentive lover than she had hoped. She loved him now, and her fleeting fancy for Ralph was quite a thing of the past.

The wedding-day was fixed; the wedding-dress nearly done, and Ruth would have been perfectly happy but for Ralph's haunting.

Knowing that she had once given him reason to think she liked him—indeed, knowing that she had—she could not use him as she would another, and complain of him to her father or brother; and the last time he crossed her path he had caught her by the arm and held her fast, and told her that she must either break with Dr. Howard or take the consequences.

"You shall never marry him, Ruth," he said; "never," and this time Ruth, who had before only wept and trembled, defied him.

"I'm not afraid of you, Ralph," said she, "I'll have a protector soon, who will put an end to your threats, and punish you for annoying me."

"Don't talk of him to me, girl," cried Ralph, and he caught her by the wrist and held her so that for a moment she quite understood how powerless a woman is in the hands of a strong man, and they were alone far from any house, with the thick trees on one side and a babbling brook on the other.

But he dropped the hand again and folded his arms and laughed:

"Little idiot," said he.

"Great brute, to try to frighten me," she cried, and sped away.

After that she would never go far alone.

Two days at last lay between the present and the appointed wedding-day, and as she sat upon the porch waiting for her lover, hoping that none of those calls that often carried the doctor miles away when he least desired it would keep him from her that evening, a small boy ran up the garden path and addressed her.

"You're Miss Ruth Pennington, ain't you?"

"Yes," she said, "I am."

"Then," said he, "the doctor is outside in his carriage, and he says he wants you to ride with him, only he can't leave his horse. Won't you put on your hat and come, he says?"

"Tell him I'll be there in a moment," said Ruth, and ran into the room where her mother sat.

"I'm going out to ride with Harry, ma," said she, and, catching up a hat and shawl that lay upon the lounge, stood before the mirror to put them on.

"Nobody will see you to-night," said Mrs. Pennington. "What a night it is for a ride—dark as pitch!"

"Not on the road, ma," said Ruth, and hurried off.

But it was dark—so dark that after the streak of light from the lamp in the parlour had ended she could literally see nothing. She found the latch of the garden gate by feeling for it, and stepped outside. There, under the poplars, stood a dark object, a sort of silhouette of carriage, horse and driver, all in one piece. She approached it; a hand met hers, and helped her in.

"Oh, how dark it is. I can't see you, Harry," said she.

Then the hand went around her waist and drew her close.

It was no unwonted thing, and surely it was right for a promised wife to yield to the embrace—and nestle her head on the broad shoulder.

"I suppose it will be lighter on the road," said she.

The answer was that little unspellable sound that people use for the affirmative when they do not want to speak—and the carriage dashed away furiously.

"Why do you drive so fast, Harry?" she asked, as they whirled through the village, the window-lights flashing past them—as it seemed—such a blurred star, no more. "The horse is not running away, dear?"

The arm tightened about her, but no word was spoken.

"Why don't you say something, Harry?" said she. "I'm frightened. Nothing has happened?"

"Nothing!" was answered, in a sort of whisper.

"But I know something has," she said. "You never behaved so before. I am trembling, Harry—feel how I tremble. I am cold all over. Harry, please speak." Still the carriage whirled on—still there was silence. And now the village was passed. They were alone on a lonely road, and faster and faster still they drove on. The thought that her betrothed lover had suddenly gone mad thrust itself like a stab into Ruth's heart. Oh, if she could see his face.

"Harry," she said, falteringly. "Harry, won't you go back now?" It is so dark. I'm tired of driving, Harry."

Suddenly he bent toward her.

"Kiss me," said he.

She lifted up her lips. As she did so, straining her eyes toward his face, the black clouds overhead suddenly parted, and from between them peeped the moon at her full; and Ruth saw by the white and ghastly light the face of Ralph Barlow!

It was he who sat beside her. She understood quite well how she had been tricked. She was miles from home and in his power. He had fulfilled his threat of vengeance.

"So, you are surprised," said he, with a loud laugh. "Come, make up your mind to it. I was good enough for you once. You have kissed me before, lassie. All's fair in love and war you know. I'll not make you a bad husband. I love you, my dear, or I'd never have done this. So good-bye to the doctor."

"Ralph Barlow, I hate you," cried Ruth. "If I was foolish enough to like you once, I hate you now. You can't marry me against my will. I'll say 'No.' I'll tell the minister you carried me off. Take me back at once. I'm to marry Dr. Howard on Wednesday."

"Indeed," replied Ralph. "Reflect a moment. You will then have been away with me two days. I scarcely think Dr. Howard will want a wife who has been away with another man two days. I think by that time you will be quite willing to say 'Yes.' Come, once you liked the notion. Those steady-going parents of yours chose the doctor for you—that's all. We'll have a merry life together; plenty of money, jolly times. Come, make up your mind to it."

"Harry will think I have played him false," said Ruth. "Harry will believe me such a wicked girl."

"Just so," said Ralph.

"And mother and father!" moaned Ruth. "Oh, Ralph, take me back home, and I'll pray for you every night of my life!"

"I'd rather you'd kiss me every day," answered Ralph. "No; I'll never go back with you!"

Then he drove on faster than before; and though Ruth uttered scream after scream, and strove in her despair to cast herself into the road, the cries spent themselves on empty air, and the strong arm about her waist made her struggles utterly useless.

At last she ceased to cry out, and sat perfectly quiet; but it was not, as Ralph supposed, that she had yielded to fate.

She was watching intently for the next house that they should pass, hoping that some one within would hear the desperate shrieks that she would utter.

At last she saw it—a square white building, in the upper windows of which a light burned brightly, for there people watched by one who suffered.

Beside the bed sat the husband, holding the hand of the wife whom he had feared that he must lose, but who was now in safety.

At the foot stood the physician ready to depart, happy in the good work that he had done.

"Good-bye until to-morrow," he said. "I think you will sleep well to-night, dear lady."

"Good-bye, Dr. Howard," said the gentleman, grasping his hand. "I am sorry you have such a long, long ride before you."

Then Dr. Howard ran downstairs and went out to his carriage.

A stout Irishman stood holding the reins.

"Heaven bless your honour!" he said. "They tell me you've saved missus's life, no less."

"With Heaven's help, I have done something," said the physician. "Well, others are as late as I upon the road."

"Yes, and—Heaven gave us, what's that?"

For, as the man was about to answer, a woman leant from the carriage that flew past and uttered a terrible cry of, "Help—save me! Help!"

"Is it rale throuble, or jest some disolute crayther making a disturbance?" asked John.

"It is a real terror," said the doctor. "Come, John, into the chaise with me and after them."

"I'm not afraid," said John; "but, docther, we might get into a tough scrimmage."

"Well, you'd like that," said the doctor.

"But they say your bride is waitin' you, docther," said John. "And isn't a broken head or nose you'd like to take to a wedding?"

The doctor gave one thought to Ruth; then, "For her sake, all women," said he, and they were flying after the other carriage.

The chase was not long; their horse was fresh, the other weary.

In fifteen minutes they were side by side.

"Who cried for help?" shouted the doctor.

A struggling form in the carriage stretched out its hands to him.

"Harry! Harry!" she cried.

"It is Ruth!" exclaimed the doctor; and then he had clutched the reins, and the man in the other carriage arose to his feet.

"Let go your hold!" he shouted. "I am armed!"

A pistol flashed in the moonlight, which shone still, though dimly.

"He will kill you, Harry!" cried Ruth.

"Yes, by Heaven!" yelled Ralph Barlow, "I will!"

The Irishman, undaunted, had sprung to the horses' heads.

"I can't hold them much longer, yer honour," he cried; "they're mad—the both of them!"

Then there was the sound of a pistol—a blaze—the smoke of gunpowder—and Ruth fainted away.

When she recovered Dr. Howard held her in his arms, and the Irishman stood near, rubbing his head and looking utterly bewildered.

There was no sign of either of the horses. On the firing of the pistol both had run away, but by this time Dr. Howard was on the ground and had clutched Ruth about the waist. They were thrown to the earth, and the bullet had grazed the doctor's cheek and cut the ribbon of Ruth's hat in two, but otherwise they were unhurt.

The Irishman had been knocked senseless by a kick from one of the horses, and what had become of Ralph Barlow was not known.

A few hours afterwards he was found dead amongst the debris of his carriage, his dead horse beside him at the foot of a precipice past which the road wound half a mile farther on.

Poor Ruth, conscience-stricken and shaken in every nerve, really felt as though it would be wrong that

she should play the rôle of bride so soon; but the doctor stood firm and claimed her on the proper day, and her wild ride through the night, with the terrible scene that followed it, seems almost a dream to her now when she recalls it. Only no daughter of Ruth Howard will ever flirt, if she can help it.

"Flirtation," says Ruth, "is nothing less than a crime." M. K. D.

VALUE OF THE DELAWARE PEACH CROP.—The peach crop in Delaware this year has been no less than 6,000,000 baskets. Of this amount over 3,000,000 have been sent off by rail, nearly 1,000,000 by other conveyances, while 2,000,000 have been used for canning and drying. Consumers have paid for them 250,000*l.*, of which 200,000*l.* has gone to the different transportation companies and only 50,000*l.* to the producers.

PEDESTRIANISM EXTRAORDINARY.—Mr. D Campbell, the pedestrian who is walking from the Atlantic to the Pacific on a wager, reached Evanston, on the Union Pacific, on the 22nd of November. He has already been four months on this journey. From the time he left Laramie till he got to Rollins he says he never sat down even for ten minutes. It was so cold that he was afraid he might freeze, and tried to find shelter at station and section houses, but, supposing him to be a tramp, they refused to entertain him, and he was afraid to stop or lie down for fear he would perish. He sends word that he will start from San Francisco, on his return trip, on February 1. He will recross the continent by the same route, with a wheelbarrow, in which will be transported his blanket and cooking apparatus. He says he expects to make the return journey from one ocean to another in 180 days.

A NOBLE WEAVER.—A good story is told by the chairman of a public dinner lately given in celebration of the Duke of Buccleuch's birthday to illustrate the aptitude for business displayed by the duke and his brother, Lord John Scott, in early life. About forty years ago, he said, when there had been severe distress in the manufacturing districts, and, among other places, Hawick, where the duke possesses a large property, this nobleman and his brother went from one weaving shop to another, making inquiries as to the wages paid for this and that bit of work. At last they came to a shop where they were weaving woollen hose, and the men assured his grace that they could only make three-pence a pair, or about ninepence a day. "That is little," said Lord John to the man sitting at the loom; "will you allow me to try more than you?" "Your lordship will make little of this," said the man. Lord John, however, sat down, and took up the shuttle, and worked away, the men all the while looking on in wonder. After a short time he pitched off one hose, then took out his watch and worked another, and at last exclaimed, "I could make fifteenpence a day at this work." It was then explained that Lord John had been brought up a good deal with his uncle, Lord Montagu, near Nottingham, one of the conditions of his staying there being that he should visit that town every Saturday in order to learn weaving.

HE LOVES ME: HE LOVES ME NOT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Maurice Durand," "Fickle Fortune," "The Gipsy Peer," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FOR the space of a minute the two women eyed each other in silence.

Each could read to a certain extent the thoughts which were flying through the brain of the other, and the eyes of each wore suspicion, mutual distrust and dislike.

Then their eyes turned instinctively towards the sleeping man, as if they would have said:

Whatever we do, whatever is said, must be done quietly. There must be no disturbing him. On that point we are agreed at starting. Now for the war to the knife!

Valeria was the first to speak; in a cold whisper she said:

"I was not aware that you were in Italy."

"Nor I that you were," retorted Selina Armitage, returning the cold regard with a touch of defiance in her hard eyes.

"Nor did I know that you were so intimate with—Mr. Raven," said Valeria, her whole soul in a torment of wounded pride and indignation at the sight of the carous which she had seen the other woman bestow upon the unconscious Edgar.

"Edgar Raven and I are old friends," said Selina Armitage.

Valeria winced and her face flushed.

Could it be possible that the woman had spoken

the truth? Had Edgar known her at some remote period of her mysterious life?

She cast the idea from her as if it were some repulsive reptile, and smiled coldly.

"Very old friends you might have added, Miss Armitage, and still scarcely explained the emotion with which you recognized him."

Selina Armitage paled with malice and rage.

"We are very old friends, and our friendship is old enough to warrant a stronger emotion than that which you witnessed. I was about to say so strangely and noiselessly witnessed."

"What I saw I saw unwillingly, and with no intent to play the spy or eavesdropper," said Valeria, "and I have a strong feeling that I have a right to demand—"

"What?" said Selina Armitage to Valeria, whose kindness of heart and sensitive brain at the idea of wounding another's feelings made her pause. "What?"

"That we seek some other place in which to finish this interview," said Valeria, nettled by the air of defiance.

"By what right do you request me to leave the room, for your words signify that or nothing, Miss Temple?" said Selina. "These are not your apartments."

"No," said Valeria, "but I am not in the position of—"

"Wife to Mr. Raven?" said Selina, calmly.

"No," said Valeria, paling.

"Ah!" broke in the other, with a deep, horrible imputation and scornful sneer in the long breath.

"I am here as Mr. Raven's nurse!" said Valeria, "and, armed with the authority which that position gives me I request you with as little harshness as possible to retire."

"On the authority of your nurse-ship," said Selina, eyeing her and preparing for a deep and daring stroke. "On that authority alone! It is not a very high one, and I shall speak with one which you must bow to. It is I who have the right to remain here and by the sick man's pillow, for I love him."

Valeria's heart forsook her in the face of this distinct avowal.

"You love him?" she breathed.

Selina Armitage sank lightly into the chair beside the bed—that very chair in which Valeria had sat for long nights and days, watching the beloved face and pouring out her love with every ministrations; and without once moving her keen eyes, in which burned a strong, bold light, from Valeria's astounded face, added:

"Yes, I love him. There is no shame in the avowal when I have been first won by the being who inspired it. Edgar Raven and I have plighted troth. If we live we shall be man and wife."

Valeria turned her head aside and struggled with the storm within. Her hand sought the pillar of the bedstead, and she grasped it as if but for it she should have fallen.

Selina Armitage watched these effects of her stroke in the dark with malicious glee. The dagger had hit the mark, and now came the question, should she strike again? It was risky, knowing so little as she did how matters really stood between Valeria Temple and Edgar Raven.

Still, as she glanced at the man's face upon the pillow, she knew that she could count upon several weeks' start, for a moment's excitement would be death to the sick man, and she decided to venture it.

"That you should have been led into an error and suffering is my fault, Miss Temple, and I am deeply sorry for it!"

Valeria turned as if she had been stung, and eyed the now demure and self-reproachful face of the exquisite actress with passionate indignation.

"It is my fault, and I shall never sufficiently blame myself for imposing any conditions on Mr. Raven!"

"Conditions? What do you mean? Speak out! You need have no fear," said Valeria, with a brave struggle for a smile of calm disdain. "It is you who mistake. Mr. Raven's engagements owe matter nothing to me. I have done no more than the veriest sister of mercy in the street would have done. Speak out, and spare your self-reproach! How long have—have you been his affianced wife?"

"Since the night of his departure from London," venturing a step farther in the deceit.

"It is false!" cried Valeria, still in hushed voice, which seemed more emphatic by its suppression. "It is false! On that day Edgar Raven knelt at my feet and asked for my love."

The other did not quail, her lead, steady eyes met the blazing ones that confronted her with unflinching audacity.

Valeria's words, far from overwhelming her with confusion, supplied her with an idea.

"It is quite true; he did on that day tell you that he loved you. I know the very words he used, for he repeated them to me in the evening. Your coldness, your disdain revealed to him as does a stroke of lightning in the darkness of a storm how foolishly he had erred. He came to me, confessed his error, and offered me what I think is his true love. You had but the shadow—but the false excitement; I have the real!"

She paused for a moment, and Valeria had time to recover something like her composure, time to steel herself to hear all the bitter truth, for so cleverly did the desperate woman play her part that, gradually, Valeria's common sense was being overcome, and jealousy, that twin-brother of love, was whispering in her ear:

"Believe! believe! He is false! he does not love you! Believe!"

Selina Armitage glanced at the still sleeping Edgar and went on, her voice low, but as distinct as a bell and as cold as steel; it cut Valeria to the heart, like a dagger.

"He told me all this, and asked me to love him. I did love him, and I do. Why should I shame to own it? Is he not all that a woman does love?"

A spasm of pain ran through Valeria's heart at the hidden taunt in the words.

"It is nothing to me," she said, brokenly, smothering her anguish as best she could. "Go on."

"I would not give him the right to call me his. I would not have him fresh from the insult of your rejection. I bade him wait. I put upon him the test of absence. I told him that he had changed his mind once, and that he might do so again; that I would not suffer by his fickleness, and I bade him go, both from you and from me; which one should linger longest in his heart that he was to declare for."

"And," gasped Valeria, with her hand pressed against her panting bosom, "and you say he has chosen—"

"Me," said Selina Armitage, blundering on the dark road, and wondering how it was that her false story worked so well. "He has chosen me, I hold a letter, here on my heart, which you shall not see, bidding me come to him; else why am I here? and she held out her thin, white hands with a mocking smile."

Valeria shuddered, and looked around helplessly for her lace mantilla.

Taking it from a chair, she threw it around her, then, with her superb figure raised to its full height, turned her blazing eyes upon her deciever.

"You are here," she said, in low, metallic tones, "and that is enough. You are here, and it is no place for me. I have only done a common act of charity, I would have done it for the lowest of Heaven's creatures. Tell him when he wakes," here her eyes, against her will, stole for a moment of wild longing towards the sleeping man, "tell him so, and tell him that the past need never trouble him, as it will never trouble me. I go from this place to-day, whither I know not, nor let him seek to discover. If he would testify his gratitude for what I have done in my self-imposed duty as nurse—" here her voice broke, for she remembered, with what agony can never be described, that it was she who had laid him low and rendered a nurse necessary. "Let him do so, forgetting and forgiving the past, as I do."

Then she turned and moved towards the door.

With her hand on the handle she turned and, in a softer voice, said:

"The medicine is on the table, the bandages for the head must be kept cold and moist. Be quiet—his life depends on it!"

Then, as Selina Armitage bent her head in acknowledgment of the information, the heart-wounded Valeria passed out—passed out, leaving the false-tongued, clever actress mistress of the situation.

For some time the daring woman sat with her hands clasped on her lap, looking before her.

Could it be true that by one bold stroke she had ousted the successful rival and got possession of the man whom she loved with a depth of passion tragic in its intensity?

Yes, she had, by a concatenation of circumstances and coincidences, by an almost miraculous ingenuity of invention, succeeded, but for how long would that success last?

No matter, she was here, mistress of the situation, and she was bold enough to be sanguine of ultimate success, for she knew that she would stop at nothing and that what her acute intelligence prompted her hand was firm enough to perform.

The day slipped away, and the sick man seemed to be sleeping his last slumber, so long did the unbroken silence seem to the motionless watcher.

At last Edgar stirred and, turning, opened his eyes.

The smile in them died away and gave place to one of profound bewilderment and amazement as he saw in the place of the lovely vision he had lived on for

the last sad, slow weeks the handsome face of Selina Armitage.

She bent over him and, with her fine eyes o'er-brimming with tenderness, took his hand.

"If, Raven," she murmured, "do not be startled. It is I—Selina Armitage. You remember me?"

"Yes, I remember you," said Edgar, in the thin voice of weakness. "I remember you. Oh, yes, I remember you and am very glad to see you. I hope Mrs. Armitage is quite well."

As he spoke his eyes, looking gaunt and large by the fever, wandered round the room.

A pang like a knife-thrust ran through the woman by his side as she felt that he was looking for the other one.

"Yes, she is quite well. She is in Venice. We arrived last night, and had such a tedious, tiresome journey."

"I am sorry for that," said Edgar, his eyes still wandering wistfully round the room. "It is a tiresome journey. It was very kind of you to call so soon. I have been rather seedy, Miss Armitage, a sort of fever, you know, but I have been well taken care of—ah! too well taken care of. I have had an angel near me. Have you seen Miss Temple? She was here when I fell asleep. She has been here, in that chair, for weeks past, watching and nursing me! Did you see her as you came in?"

"Yes," murmured Selina, in her musical voice, from which she with difficulty kept all traces of the anguish with which the loving mention of her rival's name filled her. "Yes, I saw her as I came in. No wonder you miss her! Such devotion! Do you know it was with the greatest difficulty that I could prevail upon her to leave you to my care and take a little fresh air? She was looking quite worn and pale, and I know you would thank me if I could get her to go out for a little while."

Edgar pressed her hand gratefully as his pale face lit up with a glow of gratitude.

"I do thank you. It was thoughtful of you indeed."

"And I must be nurse in her stead. Let me see, it is time for bandages. I know how to put them on and I will be very careful."

And she rose and bent over him.

Edgar was too weak to beg her not to trouble, and undeterred she changed the cloth, her fingers touching him with that tenderness which belongs so to a woman when she touches the man she loves.

Doctor Antonio, entering, found the office of ministrations filled by this new hand, and stared for a moment with well-bred astonishment.

Selina Armitage turned her face with a self-possessioned smile.

"The doctor?" she said, interrogatively.

"Yes, signora," replied Doctor Antonio. "I am the doctor" he did not add "and you?"—but his look implied the question.

"And I," said Miss Armitage, with a sweet smile, "am one of Mr. Raven's oldest friends. I have just arrived in Venice, having come post haste from England on hearing of my friend's illness. Miss Temple has been called away suddenly—"

"Miss Temple?" repeated Doctor Antonio, looking politely puzzled. "Miss Temple? I do not know the name—"

"The lady who has been so kind to Mr. Raven," said Selina, suggesting another complication.

"Ah, yes, the Signora Flor," said the doctor. "Oh," thought the clever Miss Armitage, "goop by an alias, does she! She is no better than she should be."

Then aloud she said:

"Yes, it is she whom I mean. She is compelled to visit a relation who has been taken ill, and I am to take her place here. I am afraid you will not find me nearly so apt a nurse, but I will do my best, doctor," she added, with a smile.

Doctor Antonio bowed, still puzzled, but suppressing all trace of astonishment in his face with scrupulous care.

"I am sure of that, signora," he said, and with professional gravity passed on to the patient.

Selina moved towards the door—within hearing he saw, and as the doctor came out she laid her hand on his arm.

"Doctor, in the weak, nervous state which the fever has produced do you not think it would be well to conceal the fact of Miss Temple—I mean Signora Flor's departure from him? Could we not persuade him that she had gone only for a day or two? You can do it so much easier than I could, for he knows me so well and would tell by the expression of my face that I was keeping something from him. If you would be so kind to tell him that Signora Flor had gone on a visit to a friend, that you had ordered away for a slight change, he would believe you and I should be so much obliged!" and here the smile grew quite childlike and winning.

The good doctor Antonio, though one of the sternest of patriots and professors, was as weak as water in a woman's hands, and he answered the pretty entreaty with a

"Certainly, certainly," murmured Miss Armitage. "Thank you so much," murmured Miss Armitage. "And perhaps you would not mind explaining to the servants."

"There is only one—a faithful old woman whose regard for Signor Raven is almost maternal," interrupted the doctor.

"Well, tell her, then," said Miss Armitage; "it will prevent her asking questions in the sick-room."

"Certainly—very thoughtful indeed," responded, the easily deluded doctor. "I am sure you will make a most considerate nurse."

"Indeed I will try," she murmured, and the doctor passed into the room again to assist the ingenious woman's plans by telling Edgar that Valeria had gone for a change, and that she would be absent for a few days only.

"I am so glad!" said Edgar, but he sighed. "I shall miss her, doctor; she is all my life to me now!"

"Then try to please her by growing strong," said the doctor. "Nothing will give her greater joy than your recovery."

"And I mean to recover," said Edgar, with a smile. "I know something of cold lead, doctor, and I know that the ounce I had was enough to lay a man in death's clutches, but I never meant to give in, doctor, I have something to live for!"

Doctor Antonio pressed the thin hand which Edgar held out to him, and bidding him remain silent and try to sleep stole from the room. In the studio he found Selina kneeling at the table writing a letter.

"Is there any trustworthy servant who could take this note for me, doctor?" she said.

"Yes," said the doctor, "there is a most excellent fellow below, he is Mr. Raven's servant and is called Fidelio. Shall I send him to you?"

"No, thank you, I think I will run down to him," said Selina Armitage, and with light, noiseless footsteps she glided down the staircase.

Fidelio had returned and was at his old post on the stone, whistling softly and staring grimly at the water.

As Selina Armitage touched him on the shoulder he started from his day-dream, and on turning stared with surprise, slowly uncovering however with true Italian courtesy.

"You are Fidelio, are you not?" said Miss Armitage. "Will you take this note for me to the English hotel? I am Mr. Raven's nurse."

Fidelio bowed with tightened lips and took the note.

But his eyes scanned her handsome face with grave doubt.

If she were the nurse where was the signora whom he had already grown to regard as his mistress?

The note was directed to Mrs. Armitage and the contents were as brief as the soul of wit.

"The Palace of the Doges."

"Come to me here at once, the bearer will direct you, and order the portmanteau to be sent after. Do not delay, it is important." S. A.

In half an hour the obedient Mrs. Armitage was in Raven's studio.

Her strong-willed daughter came out to her on tiptoe, and with her finger to her lip, stopped the mother's exclamation of pettish astonishment.

"Hush! there is some one else in there. Don't ask any questions, but listen. Mother, I want you to take up your position in this place, and keep a strict watch that no one is allowed to enter this room but the doctor and me. There is a room just below this opening on the staircase. That must be yours, and not a soul must pass it without my knowing it. When any one comes strike the ceiling, I shall hear you and will be ready. Don't ask any question now, you shall know all presently."

And with her usual calm assumption of superiority she led her from the room.

In another half-hour Mrs. Armitage was installed in the post of espionage and clever Selina Armitage had barricaded her lover fast and soundly.

Then she returned to the bedside and sat with clasped hands to review her position.

It was a dangerous one and full of risk and uncertainty.

"It is true that we are all the slaves of fate," she murmured. "Have I been drawn hither by that unseen electric charm which draws the loving to the loved? At least, I am here, mistress of the situation, and come what will he shall not marry Valeria Temple."

There was little wonder that the bold girl should believe in fate, for the merest chance had brought or rather driven her to Venice.

When Lord Ellsmere, her tyrant and master, had left London he had left her no money and all the debts which had been contracted in the maintenance of the house in Cavendish Square.

She had waited at first with dull apathy for some word of command from him, and as the time grew and the word did not come and the creditors became pressing, she grew anxious and ill at ease.

Lord Ellsmere had always given her some portion of the plunder wherewith to keep the lure and snare going, and she did not doubt that he would appear some day, pay the debts and commence the old game.

On various pretexts she put off the least pressing creditors and discharged the bills of the others by pawning her jewellery.

At last with the last trinket came the crash, and Selina Armitage, not unused to shifts and sudden flights, made her escape with her mother and a portmanteau.

When the creditors next called the house was empty the well-bred young lady gone.

In a hotel at Paris, with her mother whining, complaining and spreading her, the miserable girl decided to try Italy as a likely place for some means of procuring a livelihood.

She could go on the stage, turn dancer, anything to escape from the bondage in which her tyrant held her.

Travelling by night and closely veiled, the mother and daughter reached Venice.

Here the first Englishman she saw was Mr. Howard, who at once recognized her and gave her an account of his meeting with Edgar Raven.

That one name dispelled all her good resolutions to live honestly. She could not leave the sphere in which alone she could be his equal, if only in appearance. No, she must see him, she would see him, and—

Well, she decided to leave the rest to chance, and Chance, who generally rewards her slaves, for a while at least, with a show of mercies, had thrown the first trick of her dangerous game into her hands.

It now remained for her to keep up the deception on Valeria Temple and to deceive Edgar when he should be strong enough to bear it, and difficult, almost impossible as the task seemed, the reckless woman did not despair of accomplishing it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It will not be unprofitable to return for a while to our friends, the Poppleschicks, whom we have deserted too long.

If there were confusion and unhappiness elsewhere there was some in the little shop-parlour in Carey Street.

Indeed Elfy was blither than ever, and the intervals when she was not singing or laughing were filled up with a delicious reverie, which comes once and once only to every girl and boy in Christendom.

For Elfy was in love.

When last she saw Terence Vane it was at the period of his convalescence as he sat comfortably awaiting the arrival of a cup of beef tea.

Since then he had altered greatly and for the better. He was as merry and light-hearted as ever, but the carelessness had vanished, and in its place had come a cheerful gravity and earnestness which augured well for his future.

For he it was known that Mr. Terence Vane, the heir to a fine old baronetcy, had taken a bedroom and sitting-room on the first floor of a house which was not far from Carey Street, and that the said Mr. Terence Vane earned a respectable livelihood by copying dramatic and other work and by the performance of some clerical duties to a firm of solicitors.

And he it was known farther that although he did not live in luxurious chambers or dine off nine courses, or go about in his own private hansom, but used his own strong legs instead, that Terence Vane was far from unhappy—we might go farther and say that he was very happy.

All day he laboured at his task, and in the afternoon—just by chance, as it were—he dropped in at Mr. Poppleschick's, where a chair was always ready for him at the tea-table and a kindly welcome from the old man.

Elfy never said anything in the shape of welcome but it was a fact worthy of notice that she always had some hot toast and watercress—a combination to which Terence was partial—for tea, and that she gave him the strongest cup of the beverage which cheers but does not inebriate.

Different young ladies have different ways of showing their partialities.

One of Terence's old friends would have given him a flower from her bouquet with a sweet smile. Elfy gave him strong tea, toast and watercress, and

her way of showing her kindness was quite as effective if not so refined.

Very enjoyable those evenings were, before the comfortable fire in the winter, and when the summer came Mr. Poppleschick would often be prevailed upon by the young people to take a turn in the park.

Sometimes Terence would persuade Elfy to go alone with him, and these walks were perhaps enjoyed the most, for then Terence would tell her of some of the wonderful things he had read of, describe to her the course of the day's work and plan out the future.

That future was always a rather misty one, for in the midst of his honest plotting Terry would stop and mutter and murmur.

There always seemed a possibility of some event happening which would fix that future other than Terence planned it.

There was something savouring of the romantic about Terence's past, but Elfy, however curious she might be, would never by a hint reveal that curiosity, and Terence, though often on the brink of a revelation, never appeared to get over the disinclination to tell her who he was and what really was his position.

One day, at the end of the season—Terence always avoided the park and fashionable resorts during the height of the season—he and Elfy were walking in the park, talking in that strain of confidence which belongs to youth, and Elfy, listening with all her ears and heart, would occasionally turn her head aside to look at the few handsome carriages which occasionally passed along the drive.

Terence was telling her of the result of a conference which he had had with his employers, and gleefully confiding to her his hopes that he should be able to get an excellent situation as confidential clerk.

"You know, Elfy, that will be a great thing," said the heir to a baronetcy. "a great thing. I shall have two hundred pounds a year, and be a rich man. Isn't that a glorious prospect, Elfy?"

"Indeed it is," replied the girl, with sparkling eyes. "Oh, I am so glad, Terence," for she called him Terence as a sister would have done. "And do you really think you shall get the situation?"

"Yes," said Terence, modestly. "The principal, whom I saw to-day, said that I wrote a capital hand, and that I was a very intelligent fellow—of course I am only telling you what he said, Elfy."

"Go on, Terry; and so you are clever, and, as to writing, copperplate is not better, to my mind."

"Well, he said a great deal more which I need not repeat, and half promised me the situation. Joy!" he exclaimed, incautiously. "Fancy me becoming a clerk and a useful member of society."

Elfy looked up at his handsome, frank face with a wistful curiosity.

"Terry," she said, suddenly, "do not think me wickedly curious or forward, but sometimes—when you think that you can quite trust me—will you tell me—"

She stopped.

Terence coloured.

"I know, Elfy; yes, yes, I'll tell you—some day I want to forget it, it's of no consequence. We are very good friends as we are; you don't want me to be any different, do you?"

"No," she murmured, "I don't want you to be any different, Terry, but go on about the situation."

"Well, with two hundred pounds a year I should be a rich man. What will I do with the money? Let me see; first there's dear old Pop—I'll buy him a complete set of the British Dramatists in the very best binding that money can buy, and I'll take a little house in the country somewhere, not far from London."

Elfy's face fell slightly, but he did not see it.

"And I'll furnish it prettily until it looks like that cottage in which Love rested when he was tired chasing the butterfly—you know the poem I read to you, Elfy."

"I know," said Elfy, with a smothered sigh, "and he was going to leave them—going to leave her father, and—and the old cat and Bonaparte."

"There should be the sweetest little rooms you can think of; and when it is all ready then I shall—"

At that moment Elfy uttered an exclamation.

"Look there, Terry, there is some one motioning to you from that carriage!"

Terry turned his head and saw a handsomely appointed carriage from the window of which a gentleman was leaning, gesticulating wildly, and calling to the coachman to stop.

Terry changed colour, and Elfy, whose gentle eyes were fixed upon his face, whose every expression she knew, changed colour too as she saw embarrassment and confusion upon it.

For a moment he looked as if he meant to pick



[THE RIVALS.]

her up and run away, then he said, with evident annoyance:

"No, it's some one I know, Elfy; he has seen me. There, I'll nod, and we'll hurry off. I don't want to see him."

"But he is coming this way," said Elfy, trembling, she knew not why.

Then, slipping her arm from his, she said:

"Do not mind me, Terry, I can go away."

"No, no," he said, imperatively.

Then he hesitated, and as the gentleman, who was rather more than middle aged and rather stout also, came hurrying across the road, Terry hesitated, and, with a troubled look, said:

"Elfy, let me take you to that seat there. Promise me you will wait until I come to you or I will not let you go."

"I will wait," said Elfy. "You must not come."

And she tripped off just as the gentleman came up.

"Terry," he exclaimed, panting for breath, and clasping Terence's shoulder. "What, found at last! You young dog, where have you been hiding? Why, lad, lad, you can't think how glad I am to see you!"

And his eyes filled with tears.

Terry grasped the hand held out to him but remained silent.

"What, boy, haven't you a word to say to your uncle?" exclaimed the gentleman, for Terry's uncle it was. "Do you mean to say you ain't glad to see me?"

"Yes, I am glad to see you, uncle," said Terry, though his looks belied his words. "I am not ungrateful and mean enough not to be glad to see you, sir. I have heard how you were every week."

"Oh, the dence you have," exclaimed the old baronet. "And you've been dutiful enough to send me a line too, but why didn't you send me your address, eh? What have you been up to, you young dog? mischief, eh?" and his eyes glistened.

"No, sir, not much mischief I hope. I trust I have done with that," said Terry, gravely.

"Well, I can't understand it," said the baronet. "The bills too, what's become of them? They haven't sent 'em in lately."

"No, sir," said Terry, with a smile. "I think I have paid them all nearly."

"Paid them all, how?" exclaimed his uncle.

"Yes, sir; I have set apart the allowance which you have so generously paid into the bankers for me, and have nearly cleared them off. I am afraid I must have given you much pain by my extravagance."

"Paid 'em with the allowance," echoed his uncle, "and how have you lived, lad?"

"By honest work, sir," said Terry, not without a touch of pride.

"Phew!" retorted the old man, staring at him. "Work! a Vane get his living! That's a new thing. You're joking, Terry! You're joking. Work! What work?"

"Hand and brain work, uncle," said Terry. The old man burst into a loud, hearty laugh.

"Well, of all the queer jokes I've heard this is the best. Well, well, you're a strange lad, a strange lad. However, you must tell me all about it, Terry, all about it. Come, boy, the carriage is here, you must come with me. No giving me the slip again!" And he clapped a heavy hand on the boy's shoulder.

Terry glanced in the direction of the tree under which Elfy was seated.

"I can't do that, uncle," he said. "Don't ask me."

"What!" cried the baronet, then he laughed again. "Ah! I forgot. Didn't I see a some one before I came up? Ah, you're a sad dog, Terry! Come, come, lad, go and explain to her. I won't ask any questions." And he winked good-humouredly.

"Go and explain that you've met your old idiot of an uncle who insists upon keeping you no less volens! Well, we'll make that all straight, Terry; she shan't lose by it if she's kept you straight, we'll make her a handsome present and no questions asked."

Terry's face flushed.

"What do you mean, sir?" he asked, coldly.

"Tut, tut! didn't I say that we'd ask no questions?" repeated his uncle. "We'll do the handsome thing by her, Terry. I'm sorry you've got yourself entangled, lad, but we'll make a nice little present—"

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed Terry, scarlet and then pale. "You are wrong in your conjecture—wickedly wrong. That young lady is as good as an angel!"

"Eh?" said his uncle, with knitted brows. "Whom do you mean, boy? Who is she?"

"The best friend I ever had, sir, next to you," said Terry, his voice softening and trembling. "That angel saved my life in two senses; she snatched me from death and dishonour, and made a man of me."

"Eh?" questioned the baronet, still more puzzled. "What is the boy talking about? Who is she?"

"Her name is—" then Terry stopped. "I cannot tell you, sir; she is the daughter of an honest, upright tradesman—my true friend."

"Pack of nonsense!" exclaimed the baronet, angrily. "Tradesman?—true friend?—are you out of your mind, Terry? I tell you you must cut all such doubtful acquaintances! It's all very well, if they've done you a good turn to be grateful, but show your gratitude in the proper way; give her a handsome present, boy, and cry 'quits!'"

"Never, sir!" answered Terry. "My life is bound up in hers! I mean to ask her to be my wife!"

"What!" roared the baronet, starting back. "The daughter of a pettifoggish snob of a tradesman my niece—the future mistress of Vane Hall? Hold your silly tongue, sir, and come with me!"

"I cannot," said Terence. "I have spoken the truth, uncle, and I implore you not to be so cruel as to disdain the brightest and truest of Heaven's creatures. I say that—"

"And I say that I will not listen to any more such mad nonsense. Hah! Hah!" and he laughed angrily. "A pretty thing indeed! Terence Vane marry some drudge—of a—Heaven knows who—"

"Silence, sir!" exclaimed Terry. "You sought this interview, let me beg of you to end it. My gratitude and my respect, nay, my affection do not entail upon me the misery of listening to such language. You are unjust, sir! cruelly unjust!"

"Unjust! eh?" said the baronet. "Hark you, sir, once and for all, will you give up this mad idea and come with me?"

"If you mean will I desert that sweet creature there, whose love and heart I have won, I reply, sir, no, a thousand times no!"

"Then I say that you are no nephew of mine!" retorted the old man, passionately. "Remember, sir, that it lies in my power to punish such base ingratitude and disobedience. The Hall is entailed, sir, but my money I can leave where I choose, and I swear it shall not go to enrich some greengrocer's daughter, angel though she may be in your lunatic eyes. No, sir, take your choice. Take Vane Hall and my savings or that scullery-maid!"

Terence grew as white as death.

"I do choose, sir," he replied. "I choose the girl on whom my heart is fixed; and in my soul I pray that you may learn to regret the hour in which you reviled so true and noble a nature!"

The old man fixed a stern, angry gaze on the resolute face of the youth and nodded twice.

"Very well, sir, very well!" he said, in a low, threatening voice. "You have taken your choice, you have made your bed! You shall lie on it!"

(To be continued.)



[A GAME AT BILLIARDS.]

THE BARONET'S SON; OR, LOVE AND HATE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Winifred Wynne," "One Sparkle of Gold," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

"MR. VANDELEUR, are you inclined for a visit to the theatre this evening? We can get a supper at a restaurant or one of the clubs," asked Mr. Charles Bampfylde, the accepted suitor of Lucille Bradley and the only son and hope of one of the wealthy City merchants, one evening after some few weeks of acquaintance with the new tutor at Westbourne Terrace.

Oscar was perhaps scarcely as inclined as the parvenu heir of thousands in stock and Consols to cement their acquaintance by such companionship, but still with him, as in many other cases, it was just "Faute de mieux" that could influence him in such matters.

By design or accident indeed he was so completely chained and bound to the family circle that there was little hope of escaping from its "durance vile," from the coquetish wiles of the fair Lily, the more practical attacks of Rose, and the fussy demands on his attention of Mr. Bradley and his vulgar wife.

And as Mr. Bampfylde was tolerably well master of the situation in his future bride's family, Oscar knew that his best refuge lay in his interference on his behalf.

"I am quite ready, I shall be most happy," he replied. "Only I am too much of a tyro for me to be any great pleasure for you as a comrade. However, let us go—let us go," he went on, impatiently.

Mr. Bampfylde gave a smile of astonishment at the reply, but there was no more to be said in the matter, and the young men set off together.

Oscar had seen very little of theatres, owing to his secluded country life, and it was to him a fairy-like, brilliant scene, the actors and the audience alike exciting his admiration and stimulating his faded and worn senses to some degree of pleasure and animation.

"Ah, yes, it's all very well, but you've seen nothing at all yet of life, my good fellow. It's uncommonly slow at Westbourne Terrace, but still

we must have a little patience when all is at stake, you see. And when I've got Lucille fairly away from the paternal nest I shall play a different game and make the gold pieces fly a bit, so long as I keep plenty for common use, eh, Vandeleur?"

Oscar scarcely entered into the spirit of the jocose lover, but still he gave himself up in a species of despair to the tide that promised something better than starvation and stagnation, and he made no objection to the proposed finish to the evening.

There were several young men in the restaurant whither Charlie Bampfylde conducted him, and in an inner room there were others whom the sound of dice and the rumble of billiard balls betokened to be amusing themselves in a more exciting manner than merely imbibing the good things that were provided for them.

Oscar was a first-rate player at billiards—there had been a table at the Hall, and he and Lady Edith had many a time enjoyed a stirring match, while he had been very successful in his contests with still more formidable opponents.

There is, perhaps, nothing more fascinating to an accomplished player than to watch the performance of others of anything like equal merit, and Oscar instinctively approached the table and gazed eagerly on the rival strikers.

There were two of decidedly high-bred manners and appearance engaged at one of these tables, and their attention seemed caught by the handsome person and bearing of the spectator, and it was equally patent to them that he was pretty well up in the science of the sport to which they were devoted.

The quick start, the satisfied smile, and the eager watch over the "breaks" that occurred sufficiently bespoke his intelligent knowledge of the minutest details of the science they displayed. And, when at length they finished one of them turned frankly to him and said, politely:

"It is very rarely that I wish to play with a stranger, but I fancy from your air and manner that you fully understand the game, and as my friend Neville, here, is so completely thrashed that he does not wish nor care to venture again I would be very happy to exchange cards and to have a passage at arms with you, if you have no objection."

Oscar flushed eagerly at the proposition, which so entirely fell in with his own wishes.

There was something so completely attractive to one lately wearied with the vapid monotony of the whole scene at his new residence that he jumped at the offer, without even considering the risk it might entail.

In fact, he knew nothing, he could know nothing, of what were the real dangers of the play with a complete stranger, and, had he been up in these points, he would have considered that it was at the very least equal in its risk to both parties, and that he was fully capable of guarding himself from any foul play that could threaten the combatants.

The cards were exchanged, and any remaining doubts would have been banished by the style and title of that handed to Oscar Vandeleur.

"Hon. Ernest Valletot,
"Guards' Club,

"10, Victoria Square."

There could be no doubt in such a case.

Oscar quickly commenced the battle, without even asking the terms on which it was to be waged.

He played well, as we have said, but still his opponent was even more skilful. And, perhaps from not being acquainted with the table, or from nervousness, or want of recent practice, he was most decidedly the worsted in the fray.

Game after game went on.

The young heir of the Hall was even more the loser at each trial, and his nerve and courage failed him in the contest.

A tremulous, distrustful strike is the most hopeless thing that can befall a player, and Oscar, at length, was compelled to confess that he could not renew the struggle, on that occasion at any rate.

"Oh, don't be disheartened, my good fellow," said the Hon. Ernest, as the young man retired from the table, "you are a little out of practice, but still you have a most splendid stroke, and I don't doubt you'll give me a regular thrashing next time. Come, I'll give you your revenge at any other game you please. Do you play at écarté, or "rouge et noir"? That's the most exciting sport when you're at all a tyro in these things."

Oscar hesitated.

"You are about right, Mr. Valletot," he said, frankly; "I have been so completely retired in the country at my relative's, Lord Delmore's, that I have very little inkling of anything but what is common to a country house. However, I am your man, if you have patience to endure my dunderhead ignorance."

Ernest laughed gaily.

"There's very little wit in these chance games," he replied. "And, as to the ignorance, I rather guess you've a considerable deal less of the commodity than most of us. But in any case we can't do better than test each other's power. You've no one with you, I think," he added, with a glance of furtive contempt at the well-got-up but plebeian figure of the wealthy Charlie.

Oscar had no particle of meanness in his nature, and he was too completely a gentleman to fear being ashamed of any one whom he condescended to take as an associate.

"Mr. Bampfylde is an acquaintance of mine, and introduced me here, but I have no especial tie to his companionship when he is taken up with other amusements. I am quite at your service, Mr. Valletort."

"All right, my good fellow, come along," returned Ernest. "It's getting late, and these fellows shut up unconsciously early, I can tell you."

Oscar followed him into an inner apartment, of which the door was quickly shut by a baize curtain being drawn over the portal.

And, though his companion was evidently well accustomed to its entrance, and found no obstacle in his way, yet he had an idea the arrangements were not altogether legitimate and open, from the air of mystery that seemed to pervade all around.

The very sound of the voice was muffled, the tables were covered with thick and well-chosen baize, and the chairs round them were close enough to conceal the proceedings from any one not immediately overlooking the shoulders and heads of those surrounding the boards, and a general glance was cast hurriedly on the newcomers, which was apparently satisfied by the recognition of Oscar's companion.

Mr. Valletort made his way to the most secluded of these round tables, with a nod here and there to some of those whom he passed on his way.

And then, seating himself and Oscar on two vacant chairs, he commenced in a low tone to give him instructions in the game he wished to play.

It was certainly simple in some of its general details, and, of course, Oscar never dreamt of any more hidden secrets.

So after a few brief questions and answers the sport began.

Oscar was in luck so far as cash went; he won two or three rounds without any cessation, and Ernest Valletort laughed gaily at his own fortune.

"Didn't I tell you there would be a full compensation for you, Vandeleur?" he said. "I did not wish our acquaintance to begin in so unpropitious a manner, you see, so I brought you here to try your favour with the deities who preside over sports. But you must not fancy that I am a gamester or a rascal. I'm in the main an immensely steady fellow, only I do like to dip my fingers sometimes in the pool. However, I hope we shall see enough of each other to tell all this; and as you say you are a stranger in London, you may be inclined to accept my good wishes."

Oscar was embarrassed how to reply.

How could he explain to a peer's son that he—the heir of a baronetcy and the only son of a man of large estates—was actually a penniless tutor in the family of a merely plebeian if wealthy member of the middle rank?

How could he accept his friendship?—and yet how could he reject the fascinating offer of companionship with one of his own birth, his own tastes and style?

His natural sense of honour and openness of heart induced him to take the most straightforward and most humiliating course.

"It is only fair to explain to you what you are doing in your frank offer, Valletort," he said, with a flush that bespoke the effort that the confession cost him. "There is a mystery, you must think, over my fate when I confess to you that I am, though an only son, utterly apart from the present from my home, and I have, in plain words, to push my own way in the world, though I suppose nothing can hinder my tumbling on my feet at last. So now you can perhaps judge better what you are about in advancing so much in your offers to me."

Ernest Valletort laughed carelessly.

"You are a rare good fellow anyhow, Vandeleur, to have such pluck both in deed and in speech, and I am about the last man to pry into your secrets or to distrust you for not telling them. It's quite a blast of fresh air to come in contact with such a generous-hearted fellow, and so far as you are willing I shall be charmed to give you the entrée into a more amusing if not so profitable a world as you are, I suppose, living among. I don't see why you should not unite the two—the title of duke—oh, Vandeleur!"

Oscar laughed a joyous response.

He was in fact too relieved at the idea of the proffered companionship and of the result of his own frank avowal not to feel more light-hearted than he had ever done since his parting with his fair cousin.

So the young men shook hands in token of their compact of friendship and alliance, and then Oscar demanded what was the final state of accounts between.

"Oh? Oh, certainly not. We will sweep away all the profit and loss for the nonce, and begin with a fair start," said the Honourable Ernest, gaily. "I

won't promise as much for another time, but I've no idea of such sharp practice with a tyro as to fleece you right off before you were in harness."

The manner was too frank and sincere to admit of any doubt, and Oscar then began to remember his somewhat cavalier treatment of his first companion, and looked round him to see whether he was waiting his turn to join some of the players in the rooms, which he could now pretty plainly see were by no means simply confined to refreshments for the body, but afforded plenty of amusements and of diversions for the more refined and dissipated elements of human nature.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was a grand croquet party going on at the castle in honour of the foreign guests who were still lingering there.

It was, in fact, rather an excuse as once for the flirting and the more unrestrained indulgence of intercourse between the younger guests than an actual match at the fashionable game which gave the character to the entertainment. And, to all appearance, the preparations for the amusement of the visitors were most fully appreciated by them.

Music, of course, dancing, archery, and other sports were going on in the extensive grounds of the castle, and everywhere Lady Edith Dupuy was to be seen flitting about among her numerous friends, and the very soul and heart of the party and its varied members of all ages and tastes.

But one at least of the guests attended her throughout her progress round the grounds with unobtrusive and graceful but still unexpressed gallantry.

Prince Claude was certainly entitled by rank as well as by his residence in the castle, to be at the side of the fair young hostess, but still there was little chance of mistaking his real feelings and object in that incessant attention. He was too proud and too high bred to make his admiration of the young girl too obvious or open to other's comments.

But still the very air of determined right with which he appropriated her to himself was itself too coolly persistent to be mistaken save by the most careless or dull of the party.

"I suppose it is settled, then, and Lord Delmore means to catch the prince for his daughter, and bring her out as a bride, is that it?" said a childless dowager to the gentleman who was attending her at the collation, after the first instalment, as it were, of the amusements was completed.

"I really am not in the secret," replied her companion; "but one thing I do know, and that is, the prince is catching a prize—for not only is the young lady most charming in herself but I should not be at all surprised if she became a great heiress. The brother, you know, is away, and is a very peculiar fellow—jumps in the sea to save lunatic lives, and all kinds of outrageous things that will very likely send him to the other world before his time. And, I expect, they have an idea of that—these foreigners always smell the gold pretty sharply, whenever it is to be found—a sort of natural loadstone, as it seems, eh, madam?"

"There, the bell is ringing, there is something else going on now," observed the dowager, who had more leisure, perhaps, than most of her neighbours to watch the proceedings of their young hostess. "And again the prince is at her side. See, he quite takes the tone of an accepted suitor, I do declare."

It was a true though perhaps premature remark. The signal had been given for the archery to commence, and once more Prince Claude had coolly assumed his post by Edith's side as she hastened to marshal the young girls who were to take one side against the cavaliers who had to contend with them at distances that gave some equality to the contest.

"You are not going to shoot yourself, then, Lady Edith? I suspect you know that you would carry off too surely the prizes," said the prince, as the sport at length began, and the girl returned to assume her duties in another direction.

"I am not quite so vain," she replied, gaily; "but I like all these sports very much, and I have lived so secluded a life in the country that I have had time and opportunity to practise them more than some girls, I suppose."

"Yet your brother has been away, and you cannot have had the advantage of his companionship and instructions," said the prince, quickly. "Was it the cousin of whom you have spoken who trained you in these outdoor exercises?"

"Yes. Oscar and I were always excessively glad to escape when we had chance, and I certainly liked scampering about far better than my proper young-lady occupations and studies," was the girl's careless reply, for she had learned to be on her guard against all such insinuations on the prince's part.

"Ah, and that is the reason why you English ladies are so different to the foreign girls," replied

the prince. "You, who have dared so much exercise in the open air, and who are so bright and attractive, preserve youth and health and beauty so much longer than they do in our foreign climes. And, Lady Edith, it is perhaps the reason why you are so much more attractive than they are," he went on, in a more subdued and gentle tone.

Edith replied by a gay laugh.

"Come, prince, do add a little more to your flattering description of us—do tell me that we English girls are also blessed with a little common sense which enables us to estimate our own merits somewhat more truly. If I were to draw a picture of your fair countrywomen, I should make them out to be most glowingly lovely, and complete syrens in their way."

Prince Claude listened with the same provoking calmness that he usually showed to any effort of Lady Edith's to reproach any demonstration on his part.

"It may be so in some cases, Lady Edith, but not in mine, not in mine," he said. "To me there is a charm I cannot withstand in your country's maidens, and what is more, in one especially of those maidens—can you not guess whom I mean?—can you not interpret me aright, Lady Edith?" he continued, earnestly.

It was, of course, a doubtful point as to the exact implication thus given by the Italian. It was an uncertain question how far the young girl should seem to understand his veiled confession, and reply to it as a frank and true-hearted maiden was bound to do.

But Lady Edith Dupuy had at once the noble candour and the pride that disdained the slightest tinge of deception or subterfuge.

"If I did try to interpret your meaning, prince," she said, "I should be very sorry if it were as the explanation might seem to prove. Better say no more than that, please—better not go any deeper into the matter if you wish that we should continue to be friends, Prince Claude," she added, with an arch though meaning smile.

The Italian seemed to understand her, for he remained silent for a moment or two, and then he resumed the conversation in a very different and more resolute tone.

"Lady Edith, there is certainly one very wide difference between the nations," he said, firmly; "in our country and manners it is usual for a man to arrange marriage with the parents of his intended bride, and where there is extreme youth between the parents on both sides. While in England I am aware that there is a great deal to do with the young lady herself in such matters, and I would fall in with such constraint where the object of my choice is so worthy of trust," he went on, in a more agitated voice. "I would confide in you to the very full, both before and after marriage. Edith, forgive me if I am presumptuous, but I would ask of you the simple question, May I hope, dare I hope that you will sanction what I know to be your father's sincere wishes? Can you be happy as my wife, Lady Edith, with all the prestige and the love and care that I could entrust to you—if you feel I am to be trusted with your happiness? Now I have spoken plainly. It is for you to say whether I may hope for my heart's first and chief desire."

There was a choking in his rich, mellow, foreign voice that spoke more touchingly than his words to the young girl's heart.

She could see that it was truth, she could realize that he did not speak conventional forms to accomplish his object, and her girlish sympathies were in consequence truly and absolutely enlisted on his behalf, in spite of her early and spontaneous affection for her absent cousin.

"I am sorry, very sorry," she said, "I cannot say what you wish. Please do not ask me more."

He did not appear in the least disturbed or surprised by the reply.

"I understand," he said. "Little as I know of your English ways I can see this much, that you young maidens would not choose to reply so quickly in the affirmative to my question, and I am ready to give you time, ample time for your decision. I cannot and will not accept such a refusal as this, and, what is more, I am perfectly certain you will alter it before very long."

The cool audacity, as it appeared, of the avowal perfectly stupefied Lady Edith.

"You can do as you think best, prince," she said, coldly, "but I tell you frankly I am in earnest; and shall not be induced to change."

"Yes, you will," he replied. "I do not hesitate in my confidence on that head. Nay, do not look so scandalized and indignant, Lady Edith," he went on, earnestly. "Believe me I mean not the slightest insult, indeed I do not. I simply tell you that I have so entirely your father's influence on my side, I am so sure that you will in time learn to view

matters in a different light and to appreciate all I have to offer you, that I should be very foolishly distrustful if I were just to back out of the position at your first word of repulsion. Now do you comprehend me, Edith?"

"Yes," she said, in a low voice, "but you do not understand me, prince. I have a will quite as strong and resolute as yours. I inherit some of the spirit of my race, and I cannot stoop to be crushed and beaten either by you or my father, Prince Claude."

And a bright flush blazed up in the young creature's beautiful face that only added to her loveliness in the prince's eyes.

"I would not crush, I would but win you by love and patience, and that you cannot stop. You cannot prevent that, Edith," he replied, admiringly. "You are a princess for a king rather than a simple Italian prince, and it is no degradation to court you as patiently as the knights of old did their ladies of yore."

Lady Edith gave an impatient shrug. "You must work your own will, prince," she said. "But I shall not change—I cannot."

There was a provoking imperturbability in life face and manner as he listened.

"I only ask toleration, that is all, Lady Edith," was the reply, "and that you cannot refuse me, can you, in common justice to yourself and to your father? I promise you that I have too much self-respect to play the persistent and obtrusive lover, were it to a princess," he added, with a touch of pride in his tone that was decidedly more becoming than any affect applications to his rank and style of bearing.

Edith bowed impatiently.

"It must be as you please, prince. I have given you my reply, and I shall not vary," she said, coldly. "And now, if you please, we will end the subject. I cannot change and you say you cannot comprehend me, so we will leave the matter alone now and for ever, so far as I am concerned."

With many persons, and more especially with Englishmen, Lady Edith's cold scorn would have worked the cure she desired, but in this case it had a precisely reverse effect.

The very calmness and pride that she displayed were a charm for him she was striving to alliterate.

He preferred that proud and lofty style to any more humble and feminine dependences or flattered vanity. It was a fit temper for his future wife that she could listen with calmness to such a startling and flattering offer as his own. She would play her part well as a diplomat's bride and a leader of fashion in either the London or the Continental world.

Thus with a sweet satisfaction in his choice and a calm determination to press it to the very uttermost, the prince accompanied his fair young hostess to her next destination, and no one would have guessed, as they watched and listened to the playful repartees or the brilliant talk of the handsome pair, that there had been a proposal given and repulsed during the brief absence from the gay throng who filled the castle domain and grounds.

CHAPTER XII.

"WELL, Gladys, the time is nearly come for your decision. It is now the second week in December, and in a brief fortnight more I shall have to report to Mr. Brooke Rawleigh the result of his courtship," said the stern voice of Sir Lewis Vandeleur, when the young lady was as usual attending her father at the breakfast table and supplying his necessities both of the body and mind to the utmost of her power and duty.

She was certainly somewhat taken by surprise, but still she did not flinch from his keen and sharpened glance.

"I am ready, papa, when the time comes, to fulfil my promise," she replied. "I have done all I said I should obey you in at present, have I not?"

"Yes, but in some cases the submission is rather to the eye than to the heart," was the stern response. "And I shall soon learn of what spirit my child is made. I am determined so far that I shall expect a rational and sufficient objection, or else a most entire obedience. Gladys, you understand that?"

The girl bowed her head.

"I shall only ask for a patient hearing, papa. I want no more," she said. "If you will grant me the boon I most covet I will then do my very utmost to obey your wishes."

"Oh, that is very well, Gladys; you are kind enough to tell me your obediences, only, as it seems to me, you are bound on the contrary to give it to me voluntarily and entirely," he replied, bitterly. "However, just to deprive you of any excuse and to clear my conscience even of the very shadow of blame, I will allow you to name your petition, and I will grant it if it is at all within bounds of

reason. But," he added, as if suddenly recalling something that had till then escaped his observation, "you must not dare to name one name, nor to ask me about one person; all else I will try to tolerate and grant, if it is possible."

His sharp glance pierced into her very soul, as it seemed to her conscious, terrified spirit he had so truly divined her meaning, and had thus forestalled her intentions.

But she was too bent on the one dear and engrossing object of her young hopes to be thus easily repulsed.

"Papa," she said, quickly, "papa, you need not fear that I will disgrace my race by any weak pleadings and complaints, but I will be heard at least, and then you can but refuse me, banish me at your pleasure from your house. I will open my whole heart to you this once. It cannot be wrong, and it cannot harm you, if I tell you all I wish—I will not say demand—If I sacrifice my own wishes to yours in this matter."

The calm dignity of the gentle girl did in a measure avail to plead her cause. It was so distinct from wayward perversity or ungovernable passion that Sir Lewis could scarcely resist the earnest, well-considered claim on his attention that she urged without an uncomfortable imputation of injustice and severity that would weaken his cause.

"Well, I will comply so far, Gladys. I will let you speak your silly ideas and fancies without check. I will listen as patiently as I can, and then you must take the reply as final and decisive. I will have no wrangling and no rebellion, you understand? and with that condition you may speak at your pleasure what is in your wilful nature to think and wish."

It was an ungracious permission, but the girl was fain to accept it at its worth to effect her object.

"Papa," she began, with an effort that was not fully comprehended by her stern parent. "Papa, I will obey you, and tell you as well as words can explain what I wish and feel so deeply that it seems part of my very life. You bid me accept Mr. Rawleigh as my husband. If I do it will be to sacrifice my whole life to a chill and joyless and loveless marriage, and crush back all hope and affection and happiness, such as I have a right to expect. I cannot and I do not like him, even as a friend, and it is cruel to demand of me to give a promise at the altar that I know I cannot feel as long as we both live. But, papa, if anything can console me and make me happier in such a life it would be to make some one else whom I do love dearly happy in my stead. I could feel I had done some good then, and I could look back on the marriage as the means of blessing all my nearest and my dearest. May I go on, papa, will you hear me kindly?" she went on, vehemently, "will you feel for me, and do all you can for me, even if you insist on making me miserable by this wretched marriage?"

"Go on, Gladys; I promised to hear you. I did not bargain to give you any reply till you had finished," said the baronet, with unpromising sternness, that might well have daunted one less earnestly bent on her heart's desire than his young daughter.

"Then I must accept the permission and act on it as I best may," replied Gladys, firmly. "Father, I will do as you wish, I will be Mr. Rawleigh's wife and do my utmost to be true and obedient to him, if you will recall Oscar, your only son, your heir, to his home and treat him as he deserves, with a father's kindness and affection."

Perhaps it was spoken more abruptly than she intended, but the whole scene was so unpromising, her father's granite-like features had such repelling sternness in their aspect that she was fairly driven to despair, and she burst out as it were with the whole truth more rapidly and frankly than she had deemed advisable, or would have ventured upon in other circumstances.

But she scarcely could have anticipated the effect her words produced.

Sir Lewis Vandeleur literally turned livid with rage and surprise.

"Repeat that sentence if you please, Miss Vandeleur," he said. "Surely I must be mistaken, my ears have deceived me in its meaning."

The first step was taken, and Gladys had greater courage and self-possession now, she felt that matters would scarcely become worse, that her position was about as alarming as it could be so far as her father's wrath was concerned, and her most true and simple course was to support her just and lawful petition with all the firmness that might safely meet the storm.

"I asked you to grant a prayer, papa, to make a concession in return for mine," she said, calmly. "I am going to sacrifice happiness and love for the rest of my life, to obey you. It is only fair that I should ask you to conquer your prejudices against your only son, and restore him to his rights in your house. It

will bring you as much joy, and comfort as it will me, I am quite certain," she went on, pleadingly, her beautiful eyes so suffused with tears that they looked like liquid diamonds, as they were raised softly and beseechingly to her father's obstinate face.

Sir Lewis was silent for some moments, and Gladys, with the buoyancy of youth, began to cherish a hope that her arguments were working in that stern brain, that a contest was going on which might end in the blessed result for which she was ready to sacrifice so much.

The first words undecieved her.

"Gladys, I am anxious to make excuse for your youthful folly and inexperience," began the baronet. "I should at once visit your timidity as it deserves. You dare, as my child, perfectly ignorant of my reasons and intentions, to dictate to me what my conduct is to be to my own son, and to make your obedience conditional on my submission. Is it not so?—no—do not qualify and prevaricate, he went on as her lips opened to speak. "That is the real fact, and I have only to place your conduct before you in simple words to show you how insolent and how rebellious it really is, before I give you my final answer. You have one more chance of retracting now, and I am ready to forgive, and even forget this act of unheard-of timidity on your part."

Gladys calmly bowed her head.

"I cannot retract, papa. I have thought of it, oh, so long, ever since you told me about Mr. Rawleigh, and I am sure I am right, I cannot change, I must refuse such a sacrifice, except for Oscar's sake and yours. Oh, think, just once, papa," she hurried on, "think, when the end of your life comes, how happy you will be to have Oscar near you to support and comfort you in your last days, and to carry out every wish and order of yours with loving zeal. He will be so grateful, so dutiful, if you will forgive whatever you think wrong in him, and if you will but receive him once more as your son."

"Possibly," said Sir Lewis, sneeringly. "I really cannot decide on the truth of your picture, Miss Vandeleur, since it never will be tested—never. Gladys, Gladys," he went on, changing his tone, "if you ever dare to renew this folly, this worse than folly, I shall not be as patient as now. I shall instantly take measures to punish such insolence which you may little anticipate. You will obey me in accepting Mr. Rawleigh on peril of my total displeasure and disinherence, and if you ever speak your brother's name in my hearing I shall banish you at once, and perhaps for ever, from my presence. Now you know my feelings on the subject, and I desire you to drop this tragedy-queen style at once. It does not suit my taste in a daughter of mine, and my patience may give way if you try it any longer."

"Very well, papa, then we understand each other," replied the girl, with proud address that froze up every channel of natural tears and drove the soft bloom from her cheeks till they looked more like marble than their natural velvet hue. "I am your child, and as resolute as yourself in doing what I feel to be right. And I will not doom myself to misery simply for a caprice," she went on, with an impatient little stamp of her pretty foot that betokened more agitation on her part than she wished to betray.

"You mean this, Gladys?" said Sir Lewis, coldly. "Or is it an outburst of girlish passion that will pass away on further reflection? I am weak enough to hope that it may be so, and to give you one other chance of coming to your senses."

"It is no passing fancy, papa; it is but too deep and true, it will not change," returned the girl, firmly.

"Then I must so far act upon it," returned the baronet. "I must take measures to prevent your holding any intercourse with your exiled brother, and on peril of utter banishment from my favour I command you not to make any such attempt, while on the other hand I require from you a solemn promise not to imbue Wenna with your rebellious ideas and fancies if I allow you to have her as your companion."

"I have never talked to Wenna about my intentions, papa. She has no more idea of it than you had an hour since. It would have been unfair and dishonourable to have drawn her into your displeasure," said Gladys, firmly. "So far as Oscar is concerned I can never promise to refuse intercourse with him, but it shall not be done secretly nor so as to compromise you or him."

Sir Lewis laughed bitterly.

"Upon my word, I have brought up a very worthy son of our race, Miss Vandeleur; at any rate you would not have lacked courage in tongue, whatever you might have done in deed. It is a pity you are so thrown away in these commonplace days when the utmost sacrifice of heroines is to obey a father in making a proper and creditable marriage. However,

I am fully equal to meeting your perverse spirit, and I have one child left at any rate who will learn obedience from the warning of her brother and sister's fate.

"Retire to your apartments, Gladys, and so long as you keep your promise to respect your sister's nobler and gentler qualities of perfect silence in this matter I will not separate you from her. More than that I will not concede, and when the day comes that Mr. Rawleigh has promised to wait for his answer I shall give you that one last opportunity of redeeming this unbecoming insolence. Not another word, I desire, or you may repent it till the longest day of your life," he went on, his passion boiling, as it appeared, from the very absence of any food on which it could be nourished to feed the flames.

Gladys bowed respectfully as she left the room and hurried away to her own apartments with a bitter disappointment in her heart that sent the choking tears to her throat, in spite of her brave efforts to repress them.

And when she was fairly within her chamber the drops fell without restraint, and her very dress was drenched with the passionate shower, that came like summer rain to relieve the overcharged nerves.

It was not for long, however.

She had an indomitable bravery in her nature, a proud spirit that would have made a hero had she been a man, but which blazed up in scorching fire and resentment, to dry up the wet and as she considered degrading tears.

"Why should I weep thus?" she muttered, as she dried her bedewed face. "I have done no wrong. It is rather for my father to mourn over his hard and cruel injustice to his children. I cannot—I will not yield!" she continued, pacing the room hurriedly, as if to vent the irritation of her heart. "If it were a lover, I might sacrifice my own will to my father's, but not Oscar—poor, ill-used, deserted Oscar. He has suffered enough already from his nearest and dearest. I will stand by him to the very last—he shall never suffer from the desolation of feeling himself an alien to his race and kin. But I must wait and be patient—I must hope and pray, and be brave," she murmured, clasping her hands. "If other girls can give up all for a lover, why should I shrink from a holier and nobler sacrifice?"

It was perhaps a Quixotic idea, but at least it had a true and generous purpose that hallowed and ennobled its romance.

And when Gladys had mastered her emotion and proceeded to resume her usual occupations there was a lofty calmness in her feelings that brightened the whole expression of her lovely, girlish face.

(To be continued.)

SNOWDRIFT:

A STORY FOR CHRISTMAS.

CHAPTER X.

DENBIGH, satisfied that his plot had succeeded, quickly retraced his steps, and was soon out of hearing. It was well for the success of Dr. Poynter's plans that he did so, for the unfortunate man continued to cry out, and said, in a pathetic tone:

"Denbigh, my son, help me; I am your father. What is the meaning of this? Will you not save me? Oh, Heaven! must I die in the snow?"

The air gave back weird answers to his appeal, and the wind mocked him. Steadily fell the snowflakes, and his doom seemed certain. He prayed to Heaven for that help which men refused him, and, with despair in his heart, gave himself up to die.

In the meantime Denbigh went towards his home, hearing the old man's voice ring in his ears, and feeling that he had been guilty of a dastardly crime. It is true that he had not laid a hand on the old man, but he was none the less his murderer. The strange guest would not have fallen into the drift if he had not shown him the way. He was accountable for the death which was rapidly overtaking the old man, and he felt all the stings which the coward who assails trusting old age must feel, be he as hard as adamant and as callous as was Judas.

He ran most of the way back through the blinding snow, which seemed to take a pleasure in retarding his progress; and the wind which beat against him, he fancied, in the distemper of his imagination, called him murderer and assassin, the assassin of gray hairs and the betrayer of a confidence misplaced! When he reached the lodge he was out of breath and exhausted, and was glad to find Dr. Poynter sitting up for him. Shaking the snow from his garments, he threw his hat and cloak

in a corner, and sat down before the fire, resting his thick, heavy shooting-boots on one of the bars of the grate, where the snow quickly melted, and hissed against the hot iron.

"Well?" ejaculated Poynter.

"He is dead by this time. He fell into the drift, and there I left him," replied Denbigh. "I had no hand in his actual death, though I led him up to the place. His voice is ringing in my ears yet. 'Help! help me, or I perish!' he cried. But I flew from the spot. Tell me, Poynter, why you wished that man dead. What grievance had you against him?"

"Shall I let you know?" answered Dr. Poynter, with a Mephistophelian smile. "Well, it can do no harm now. The deed is done, and can't be undone. You want me to tell you why I wished that old man out of my way? The answer is simple. He was your father."

For a moment Denbigh Fearon sat like one stunned or dazed, but his quiescence did not last long. A great sob broke in his throat, and, rising from his chair, he rushed upon the doctor, and seized him by the neck, holding him in a vice-like grasp, and swaying him to and fro like a poplar in a storm, crying:

"Villain! you have made me kill my father, and I will kill you! We have thought him dead, but he has come to life again. I need not doubt that, for you are not the man to jest on such a subject. Wretch! prepare to die, for I will have life for life."

Fortunately for himself the doctor was self-possessed and warmed with the spirit he had been drinking during the evening, while Denbigh Fearon was cold and exhausted with the mental alarm and bodily exertion he had gone through. This gave the doctor an advantage in the fierce struggle which took place, and after a few minutes had elapsed he threw his young but unvigorous antagonist from him, and stood master of the battle, folding his arms and looking on grimly at his discomfited opponent, who lay at full length on the floor, breathing heavily.

"Will this be a warning to you when you next want to try your strength with me?" exclaimed Dr. Poynter. "I am older than you, but I am not a child. I repeat that the old man, whom you by my orders conducted to his death, was your father, who has miraculously returned from a long captivity among the Africans. His return was inconvenient to me. He stood in my way, and, having a tool like you ready to my hand, I removed him."

Denbigh Fearon rose and glared like a wild beast hungering for its prey at Dr. Poynter, but did not attempt again to attack him. With a frantic haste he put on his hat and coat. A glass of punch stood on the table. He drank it, and, filling it again and again from the not yet exhausted bottle, emptied it each time. He made towards the door. Dr. Poynter, alarmed, barred his progress.

"Stop me at your peril! I am desperate," cried Denbigh, "and go to save my father!" and as the doctor would not move he struck him a heavy blow which knocked him on one side, and he passed through the door, and presently stood once more in the fast-falling snow.

It was a mad project, and one which only a man with his brain on fire would have conceived, that of going back in a snowstorm to search for the man he had been told was his father. Denbigh, however, was paralyzed to his heart with shame and remorse; and a burning wish he had to undo the wrong he had been guilty of, and erase from his brow the fearful name of parricide, swayed him entirely. He was not master of himself. He was urged on by an irresistible impulse, and prepared to sacrifice his own life if he could not save that of the man he had so ruthlessly hurried to destruction.

It was some time before he reached the snowdrift where he had left the strange guest struggling. What his fate was he could easily conjecture, but he hoped that life was not yet extinct. He had lost his way several times, and it was more by accident than anything else that he had kept in the right road. If he could have looked back and seen Dr. Poynter, he would have beheld him smoking placidly by the clear, sea-coal fire, inwardly ridiculing the efforts he was making, thinking them of nothing worth, and predicting a lamentable failure, for the doctor thought that the father would be dead long before the son reached the fatal spot, and hoped in his heart that Denbigh might meet with a similar death. Then, indeed, he would be master of the situation. Wife and fortune would both be his.

Denbigh looked on each side of him, but he had no lantern this time, and the snow drifted into his

eyes and darkened the landscape. He could not tell where he was exactly, though he guessed that he was near the fatal snowdrift. Raising his voice, he called aloud upon the stranger, but received no answer, save that which the mocking wind chose to return him.

Extending his arms to feel his way, he penetrated towards the left of the track, and, stumbling forward, fell into a mass of snow, in which he sank.

"Help! help me, or I perish!" he cried, in agony, just as the strange guest had cried before, but his anguished lament met with no response. Again and again he raised his voice, as his blood chilled in the icy embrace, but no human being heard him, and retributive justice was alone distinguishable in the fierce howl of the wintry blast and the mournful echo which his cries found in a neighbouring hollow.

The moaning wind mocked the wretched young man as it careered past him, hissing in his shrieking ears the name of parricide. He had nightly dreaded the fulfilment of his word to Dr. Poynter, who had exacted a terrible penalty from him, and made him pay very dearly for recovering the love of his lost Leonie.

Deeper and deeper he plunged in the soft and engulfing snow, which closed about his limbs and impeded his progress, until he was obliged to confess to himself, with sinking of the heart, that he was hopelessly in the drift; his body became benumbed, and he had scarcely the power left to try to move. If he could have saved the poor old man he had so ruthlessly lured to his doom, he would not have cared so much for his own life; but he was powerless—he could save neither the life of his father nor his own.

Raising his voice, he cried for help, when there was no one near to him to render any assistance.

Snowdrift was around him on every side, and he could not conceal from himself that the same snowdrift into which he had betrayed his unsuspecting father was to be his grave.

Shutting his eyes, he forebore to struggle farther and seemed to go to sleep, the frost-laden wind moaning over him, singing a dirge which served as a death-knell.

We must leave him, to transport the reader to the comfortable parlour of the village inn, on the same eventful evening. This was the inn at which the strange guest had intended to pass the night, and to which Denbigh Fearon undertook to guide him when he led him into the fatal drift.

Mine host of the "Fearon Arms," an old servant of the family, who had quitted their service to establish himself in the wine and spirit business, piled fresh logs upon the fire, and stirred the blazing coals with his own hand—for was it not Christmas Eve? and had not the season set in with a severity unknown for years past?

There were several customers in the room, more or less well known in the village, for Andrew Marvel, mine host of the "Fearon Arms," prided himself upon the select company who from night to night assembled in his parlour, and he was wont to say that he would wager a mug of ale that their conversation was above the average.

It being a season of festivity and indulgence, a little above that which they were accustomed to, they had subscribed for a bowl of punch, which had been speedily disposed of, and were about to order another when a young man entered.

He was about five-and-twenty years of age, but his face was much more serious in its expression than that of young men generally. The lines of his mouth were drawn down, and a subdued fire flashed from his eyes. His dress was new, though not of the first fashion, and he did not appear to have walked far through the snow. His hands were white but not over-delicate, and underneath the white skin were layers of muscle like iron. He seemed to be as strong as a lion, and was evidently one who had seen sorrow in some shape or other.

A large dog, a cross between the Mount St. Bernard and the Newfoundland breeds, followed him. It had a collar on its neck, upon which was engraved, on a brass plate, the word "Leonie."

Bowing to the assembled company, the young man took a seat near the fire and said "Down, Leonie!" to the dog, who glided under his chair, and laying its head on its paws, went to sleep, while its master called for some hot brandy and water and a pipe.

"Perhaps the gentleman would like to join us!" exclaimed Jacob Burt, who was the inspector of police in the village, and generally took the lead wherever he happened to be.

"I shall be happy to do so. It is Christmas Eve, and I wish to be sociable," answered the young man. "I will cheerfully pay my share of whatever you have or are going to order."

The money for the fresh subscription was collected, and the landlord soon reappeared with a

second steaming bowl of punch, which he brewed with a skill all his own.

"Capital!" ejaculated Mr. Marsh, the butcher, as he raised his glass to his lips and set it down empty. "You may well say that, sir, remarked the landlord. "I have a peculiar recipe for making punch, which I got from my old master, Mr. Fearon."

The young man started at the mention of this name, but almost immediately recovered his serenity and composure. Slight as his movement was, it did not pass unnoticed by Jacob Burt, who was lynx-eyed enough to allow few things to go by him unnoticed.

"Mr. Fearon used always to put in a little curaçoa," continued the landlord. "He had seen the Prince of Wales, when Regent—afterwards George IV., you know—do it, and he would rub the bowl with a bit of citron; but I must not tell you any more, or you'll all be making punch at home, and your wives will like it so well that they'll keep you making it, so that I shall lose your respected custom and have to put my shutters up."

Everybody laughed, and Wagner, the grocer, who drank enough to make himself talkative, exclaimed to the stranger:

"Come far, sir?"

"From London," replied the owner of the dog.

"On a visit in the neighbourhood, I presume, sir?" continued the garrulous grocer.

"I have business down here."

"What name, sir? I know everybody, and may perhaps be able to give you some information."

"My business happens to be of a private nature," was the reply.

"Ah—hem! Beg pardon, I'm sure," stammered the disconcerted tradesman, adding, to escape from his embarrassment, "Fine dog you have there, sir."

"Yes. It belongs to a very dear friend of mine—a young lady to whom I was engaged to be married. The marriage did not take place, and my love was false to me, for she became the wife of another man. I had the dog taken care of, and when I came—that is to say, when I had an opportunity—I took possession of the dog and gave it the lady's name, for, though I hate the woman with all the bitterness of a crushed and deceived heart, I love the dog. There is a bit of biography for you!"

"What made you separate from the dog for a time, sir, if I may make so bold as to ask?" demanded Jacob Burt.

"Now, my friend, you want to know too much," said the young man. "I have related a portion of my life to you, but I did not undertake to give you a life history, nor shall I do so."

"Pardon yourself about that. Perhaps there is something in it you would not like everybody to know," replied Jacob Burt, who was piqued into this reply.

An angry flush stole into the young man's face. He was about to retort in the same strain when Andrew Marvel exclaimed:

"Come, come, gentlemen! This is not right. No wrangling, if you please, and on Christmas Eve too! Don't let the gentleman go away and say we did not know how to treat a stranger. I'm sure you neither of you mean anything. So shake hands and be friends!"

The young man extended his hand freely enough, and it was grasped by the police inspector, who caught sight of the inside of his fingers, and said:

"Any one would think you'd been picking oakum."

"Perhaps I have," replied the stranger, fixing his keen, gray eyes upon the inspector. "Anyhow, it's no business of yours, and, if you'll say openly that you want to insult me to such a pitch that I must either withdraw or throw you out of the window, I'll make up my mind which course I shall adopt."

"You can do whichever you like best, only I should advise you strongly not to try the latter. Two can play at throwing out of windows, and I should not like to hurt you," answered the inspector, tauntingly.

In vain the landlord and the other men present tried to cast oil on the troubled waters. Jacob Burt was not a quarrelsome man generally, though it could not be denied that he had an exaggerated idea of his own importance. The fact was, on this particular evening that he had had enough, or, strictly speaking, too much of the excellent compound upon the manufacture of which the landlord of the "Fearon Arms" prided himself.

He even so far forgot himself as to administer a kick to Leonie, who happened to go a little nearer his legs than he liked, and this last and unjustifiable act so enraged the dog's master that he flew upon the inspector with the fury of a roused tiger, and attacked him furiously.

A disgraceful riot was imminent. It had commenced, indeed, and the harmony of the evening was

disturbed. The village tradesmen immediately got up and endeavoured to separate the combatants, who were dealing one another blows with a want of science which did not allow them to injure themselves much, and, fortunately, the efforts of the peacemakers were crowned with success. The fray was stayed, and the enemies looked at one another with hate in their countenances.

Suddenly Jacob Burt, whose lynx eyes again stood him in good stead, saw something lying on the floor, and, making a dash at it, picked it up. It had fallen from the pocket of the young man during the struggle, and, though it might not have conveyed any meaning to an ordinary observer, to the police officer it spoke volumes.

Bestowing one glance at the paper—a rapid one, it is true, but one which enabled him to be sure that he was not mistaken—he exclaimed, in a voice hoarse with triumph:

"Ha, ha! Who was right? I, or those who took your part? Now I know why you did not have the dog with you for some time! Now I can understand what is on your fingers, which bear the traces of tar no soap and water have yet been able to remove! Now I know what you are, if I don't know who you are, Mr. Stranger!"

The young man was still panting with exertion. The veins on his forehead were swelling to bursting and his hands were still clenched into fists; but at these words of his late antagonist he cowered before him, his muscles relaxed, his face became less rigid, his hand fell powerless by his side, his under lip sank, and his limbs shook under him.

"Well, what is he?" asked Andrew Marvel, who, as host, thought it incumbent to take up the cudgel on behalf of his casual guest.

"What is he?" repeated Jacob Burt, in a tone of withering scorn. "Why, a felon—a convict! Here's his ticket-of-leave!"

Again he held up the incriminatory document he picked up on the floor, and when every one had had a good look at it he placed it on the table, and smoothed the crumpled paper out with his hand, and went on:

"I have seen heaps of these things. You know the law requires a ticket-of-leave man to show his ticket at stated intervals, and in my capacity of police inspector lots have come under my notice. There's no doubt about it. There's the name of the convict, Guy Hardress, and the jail, and the governor, and then it's viséé, as they say in France, at the office in London. The fellow's come down here for no good, I'll warrant, and it is fortunate I found him out. His coming here is an argument in favour of my suggestion of forming ourselves into a club, and having a room to ourselves—promiscuous company is never to be relied on."

The young man sank into a chair, and, breathing heavily, appeared to be much disconcerted at what had taken place, and to revolve in his mind the best course of action he could pursue. His meditations were short by the landlord, who exclaimed:

"You'll please go to the car. Everything you want will be served you there, as it's a cold night and Christmas Eve, though I don't want such gentry as you. Anyhow, you can't stay here, amongst respectable people, that's clear as daylight to you. Comprehensive, isn't it?"

"Sometimes a man is more sinned against than sinning; and though appearances are against me, I dare say I could hold my own and vindicate myself, if I chose to take the trouble, which I don't," replied Guy Hardress, who strode over to the table, seized the ticket-of-leave, put it in his pocket, and whistling to his dog, strode out of the room, his eyes flashing with a latent fire, but refusing to meet those of any in the apartment.

He strode out of the tavern, and through the village with long, impatient strides, regardless of the snow, which had collected in heaps, and would have retarded the progress of one less determined.

The dog Leonie walked at his heels, and together they trudged along the road which led to Highfield Lodge.

Guy Hardress, taking advantage of the solitude, talked to himself, saying:

"It was her doing! She made me a thief. I never thought of stealing until she put the idea into my head and laid the scheme. Am I to suffer all my life for what I did for her sake? Better have my revenge, and die like a man by my own hand afterwards, or go to a foreign land; but Denbigh Fearon must not live. The false-hearted Leonie may drag on a weary existence. The memory of her peridy when she is deserted and turned adrift will be sufficient punishment for her. But Denbigh Fearon is doomed!"

At this moment the moon broke through a rugged mass of cloud, and shone out brightly. The snow had ceased to fall, and a wide expanse in white dazzled the weary eye.

Guy Hardress turned round. He had missed his dog!

"Leonie! hi! Leonie!" he cried.

The deep baying of the hound was the only response, and, looking round to his left, he beheld the sagacious animal dashing the snow away from a certain place with its paws, and giving tongue loudly the while.

CHAPTER XI.

FINDING it impossible to get the dog away from the spot where he had taken up his position, Guy Hardress went back, treading with the utmost caution, for he soon perceived that he was on the edge of the snowdrift. He sank in up to his knees, but, being young and vigorous, he soon extricated himself from his dangerous position.

Some hazel and elder trees grew in a hedge hard by, and, with a knife he had in his pocket, he cut off a quantity of branches, and, throwing them on the snow, made a causeway sufficiently strong to bear his weight, and this he constructed up to the spot where the dog, obeying the instincts of his breed, continued baying with all his might.

When the causeway, thus ingeniously made, was completed he ventured upon it and had not gone far before he distinguished the head and shoulders of an old man, who had stuck fast in the snow, and was unable to move.

Whether he was dead or not he could not tell.

Exerting himself to the utmost, he extricated him from his perilous position, and half-carried, half-dragged him to the roadway, by the side of which he laid him, and by the aid of the moon he made an examination of his body, finding, to his great satisfaction, that, though the extremities were very cold, the heart still beat.

"Heaven be thanked!" ejaculated Guy, as he tried to think how he could get the poor old man whom he had found in the drift to some place where heat and restoratives could be applied.

This was essential, for, though living, it was evident to an unscientific man that life would speedily become extinct if help in some way were not afforded.

The dog watched the removal of the old man with apparent satisfaction, and began to again tread cautiously on the snow, which bore its weight with only a trifling sinking in.

The frost was very keen, and the surface of the snow was becoming harder every hour.

While Guy Hardress was in great perplexity as to what he should do the dog began to bark again, and continued to do so with such pertinacity that its master cut down another lot of boughs, and constructed another causeway, similar to the first, upon which he ventured, as he did before, and to his astonishment found a second body in a position very like that in which he had discovered the old man.

The drift hereabouts was slightly hilly, and shut out the moon's rays to some extent, so that Guy could not distinguish the features of the body, which he dragged with infinite pain and trouble to the bank or side of the old gravel pit in which the drift had collected.

Having placed it in the road, on the hard, crisp snow, the moon shone full upon it, and Guy Hardress started as if a snake had bitten him.

"Denbigh Fearon!" he cried.

Then he sank on one knee in the snow, looking very ghostly and unearthly in the pale moonlight, and put his hand on his heart just as he had put his hand on the heart of the poor, white-headed old man.

There was a slight pulsation.

"He lives!" he continued. "Oh, I can see the hand of Heaven in this! Vengeance is not for an insignificant creature like me; and yet—and yet he stole my love from me—he had me sent to prison, and made to work for nearly two years like a slave. Can I—ought I to forgive him for that? Oh, the agony of those two years! And yet, again—he had a right to do so. I robbed him. Rather should I hate the serpent, the detestable wretch, the viper in woman's form, who urged me on to the deed, and left me to suffer all the consequences of my act, afterwards regarding me as if I had never been and marrying my rival. Oh, yes! yes! she shall suffer! she shall pay the penalty! And I will help this man back to life again, though it would be easy indeed to consign him to the grave which yawns for him. See!" he added, feeling his cold, pale face, "the hand of death is on him now. He is unconscious. The heart beats faintly, but will, without help, soon be silent, and then the soul will go—will go—who can say? As he has sowed so shall he reap. I will not judge him."

The sound of wheels fell upon his ear, and he started up, to find that a carriage and pair, owing to

the deadening of the wheels by the snow, were almost upon him.

Two large red lamps, shining out like stars, cast lurid effulgence before him, rendering all in their shadow dark and funereal.

Fearful lest the vehicle might run over the bodies, which he had placed in the road, Guy raised his voice and shouted loudly, placing himself in the middle of the way, so that the carriage would have to pass over him unless it pulled up.

The coachman almost threw his horses on their haunches with the suddenness with which he drew rein, and a gentleman, opening the door, sprang out upon the snow, exclaiming:

"Hey! hullo! What is it? What's the matter? Why don't you go on? Snowed up, eh?"

Guy Hardress stepped forward and replied: "No, sir. The way is clear enough, but, as you are a gentleman, and I hope a Christian, I will beg your help, for here are two men whom I have providentially rescued from a snowdrift hard by."

"Two men, eh? Where are they?" asked the traveller.

Guy ventured to remove one of the carriage lamps, and by its aid indicated the position of the bodies.

"They still live," he said. "That I have satisfied myself of by ascertaining that the action of the heart has not stopped, but how long they will continue to exist depends entirely upon the aid they receive and the despatch with which it is given."

"Bless me! how dreadful!" said the gentleman. "It is fortunate I came by this road. I am a doctor, and have been called to a case at Highfield Lodge. Dr. Poynter, a most estimable man, and a member of my own profession, has had a fit. The groom rode over to the village for me. Apoplexy, I fear, from all accounts. Dear me! what is to be done? Better bring them on to the Lodge. Do you know who they are?"

"One I think is Mr. Denbigh Fearon."

"Bless my soul! Dr. Poynter's son-in-law. Bear a hand, young man, and we will put them both in the carriage. Dear me, how extraordinary!"

A few minutes sufficed to put the bodies in the carriage, and the doctor, keeping the lamp Guy had detached from its place, began to chafe the extremities and administer internally a little brandy he had brought with him, "to keep the cold out," as he ingeniously admitted. Guy mounted the box with the coachman, the dog ran behind, and off they started for Highfield Lodge.

They had not very far to go, and the high-bred horses made excellent way, in spite of the wretched state of the roads.

Events were multiplying themselves.

Dr. Poynter had, soon after Denbigh Fearon's departure, been seized with a fit of apoplexy, which threatened a serious termination, and Mrs. Poynter, in a state of great alarm, had despatched a mounted messenger for a doctor.

Probably the scene with Denbigh before his departure had acted upon the nervous disposition of Dr. Poynter, and produced the result which threw the whole household into a commotion, which was not lessened by the fact of Denbigh's absence at such a time and hour.

No one knew whither he had gone, nor could anyone give any account of the stranger guest.

Leonie got up, dressed herself, and came downstairs, endeavouring as best she could to console her mother-in-law, and feeling somewhat nervous and anxious about Denbigh, who did not tell her when he left her that he was going out.

In the midst of the excitement, which was shared in more or less by all the inmates of the household, the doctor's carriage drove up, and Mr. Maraden, who was a short, dapper, active man, jumped out, and, with the assistance of the coachman, carried in the first body, which was that of the strange guest. It was quickly followed by that of Denbigh Fearon, and both were placed in the drawing-room, at a judicious distance from the fire.

Guy was nowhere to be seen.

When he had given directions as to the treatment of the half-frozen men Dr. Maraden went upstairs to see Dr. Poynter, and found him in a very bad state indeed.

He took some blood from him, and adopted the remedies which seemed best to effect his recovery, and ran down to the drawing-room, where he was gratified to see both Denbigh and the old man sitting up.

A seraphic expression lighted up Denbigh Fearon's face when he saw that his father was alive.

How he had been saved, or how he had himself escaped from the doom which threatened him he could not tell.

He looked towards Dr. Maraden, with whom he was acquainted, for an explanation.

"A little more of this hot brandy-and-water," exclaimed the fussy little doctor, going from one to the other with the glass in his hand. "Won't hurt you. Finest thing in the world to restore the circulation, except friction, and my arms ache so with rubbing you on the way here that I must positively decline to rub any more."

"I am like one in a dream, doctor," said Denbigh. "Will you please to explain how we are here?"

"Gladly, though there is one who has more right to do than so than I; but where he has got to I can't imagine. Beshall, perhaps, and does not want to be publicly thanked."

"Thanked?"

"Yes. This man of whom I speak saved you from being frozen to death. He had dragged you both from the snowdrift, and had you lying in the road as my carriage came along. Fine young fellow—tall, muscular, litesome as a tiger!"

All at once Leonie, who had been listening to the doctor, uttered a shrill scream.

A big, shaggy black dog had come into the room, and was licking her face, having put his paws in her lap as she sat on the sofa.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed the doctor.

"Oh! the dog. Drive the brute away. He is wet. Look at the snow all over him. It is melting like a candle in front of a fire. My dear young lady, your precious dress will be utterly ruined."

Leonie made no answer. She did not attempt to repulse the dog, which continued to lick her face and hands undisturbed.

At that moment a figure appeared on the threshold. It was that of a man. He fixed his eyes on her, and, beckoning with his hand, said:

"Leonie, it is I. Come!"

"Oh! save me! save me!" cried the wretched woman, raising her hands imploringly. "It is Guy. Save me. He will kill me. I see it in his eyes."

The strange guest and Denbigh Fearon, although in possession of their senses, were too weak to move, and they could only look on in silent wonderment.

The figure in the doorway repeated in a solemn, almost sepulchral voice:

"Leonie, it is I. Come!" and added imperatively: "I command you!"

"Oh! save me!" again said the terror-stricken creature. But as if impelled by some extraordinary magnetic attraction which she had no power to resist, she rose, and, pushing away the dog, which continued to caress her, made for the door.

Guy Hardress advanced to meet her, and, placing her arm within his, dragged her to the door, half dressed as she was, her dishevelled hair hanging down her back, her eyes dilated with horror, and her fear-laden face pale with an unknown and indefinite dread.

A moment she hung back, the next she had disappeared, and the doctor awoke from the trance into which this strange scene had cast him.

"Here! Stop!" he cried. "There is something wrong about this. Young man! stop, I say! What does it all mean?"

There was no answer to his appeal.

He rushed into the hall, which was empty, and Denbigh Fearon and the strange guest followed him with their eyes, which expressed the astonishment they felt.

(To be continued.)

OLD RUFFORD'S MONEY.

OR,

WON WITHOUT MERIT, LOST WITHOUT DESERVING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Fighting for Freedom," etc., etc.

CONCLUSION.

MANY-COLOURED dresses, bright lights, gay music, lustrous jewels, sparkling eyes, merry faces, cheerful laughter, and "many-twinkling feet," made the old Grange shine and resound on the evening of the 4th of March, 18—. The spring day had been sunshiny and smiling, and more than one denizen of Broadmoor had repeated the very old proverb of "blessed is the bride that the sun shines on." For was it not the day of a double wedding?

The chancel of the old church was a perfect bower of evergreens, enlivened with thousands of spring flowers.

Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength,

Nor were wild flowers wanting, from hedgerow and meadow or brooklet. From—

The bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlip with the nodding violet grows,
There too were the humblest and lowliest of flowers.

The daisy,
Whose white investments figure innocence;
And snow drops, hemmed with snows, and
white as they

But harder far, chaste harbinger of Spring,
Stern Winter's latest child, a silver gem appears;

Crocus of every hue, the tender lilac,
The blue so clearly soft and some of golden glow.

The flowers of Hope whose hue is bright
With coming joy. The wallflower sweet
That speaks of faith surviving crumbling run.

And hymcinth, whose azure bells
Rival the blue cerulean tints of heaven;
Sweet rosemary, whose wont it is to bloom
On January's frosty eve, and give

Grace and remembrance of the pleasant past,
And savour to love's future. Nor was
The pansy wanting which our Shakespeare

sings,
And maidens still call "Love-in idleness."

There, too, the shining holly and laurel, the deep-green juniper, the everflowing broom, the clustered laurestinae, the glowing pyrus japonica and arbutus, sprang beneath every groined arch, and clothed the Gothic columns of nave and aisle with living verdure and colour.

And wherefore was all this? Need we tell the reader why the bells were ringing out so lustily, why they "fired" and clanged, and the "Broadmoor Youths' Society" executed that day "a double set of grandiose triples" in one hour and forty minutes?

Why guns fired, even by unlicensed persons, were unnoticed by squire or gamekeeper? Why aquila cracked, rockets fizzed, and bonfires cracked at night on every hill around? Why the village band, reinforced by every archer who could hammer on a pot or kettle, make a drum musical by thumping it with a marrowbone, twang a Jew's harp, or swing a "bullroarer" made of a notched and loaded lath, drummed, blew, thumped, and scraped until all were out of breath and exhausted, and only recovered wind and strength after a leg of mutton and trimmings, washed down by a barrel of strong beer at the "Perceval Arms"?

Why every girl in Broadmoor put on her best bib and tucker and adorned herself with her gayest ribbons? Why, in short, all the village was in en fête outdoors and indoors?

Well, then, if you must know, it was because on that morning two combined wedding parties, on matrimonial thoughts intent, formed a procession which drew up at the church door in the following order.

As we fear, however, that our poor ability might fall in attempting to give in minute particularity the proper style and title of the august personages who figured on this occasion, and as we know the censure with which our fair readers would justly visit us for such unpardonable slovenliness, we have copied from a unique copy of the "Smethwick Standard" the special reporter's list of the procession, which forms part of a five-column account containing, with the festivities, the history of the Grange, the pedigrees of the Perceval and Pennington families (from Burke), a biographical sketch of Captain Perceval, R.N., and a number of epitaphs from Broadmoor churchyard. Here is the procession—

"First carriage—The bridegroom, Bushby Frankland, Esq., of Rufford Gorse; the bride, Cecilia Chesterton, of the Cedars, Broadmoor; bridegroom's best man, Harrison Hartwell, Esq., of Pychley Manor; Ralph Chesterton, Esq., father of the bride.

"Second carriage—Four bridesmaids.

"Third carriage—The bridegroom, Capt. William Sherlock, R.N., O.B., Victoria Cross; the bride, the Lady Amina Perceval, eldest daughter of Sir Robert Perceval, Bart., of the Grange, Broadmoor; the bridegroom's best man, Lord Pennington-Perceval, of Pennington-Perceval; Sir Robert Perceval, father of the bride and of Lord Perceval-Pennington.

"Fourth carriage—The bridesmaids.

"Fifth carriage—Lord Pennington, of Pennington, and his daughter, the Lady Augusta Pennington-Perceval, sister of the bride, the Lady Amina Perceval; two Misses Hartwell.

"Sixth carriage—Rev. Andrew Blair, D.D., chaplain to Lord Pennington; Dr. Eusebius Wilson, physician to his lordship; Miss Louise Clara Perceval and Miss Ada Perceval, youngest daughters of Sir Robert Perceval.

"A numerous train of carriages, containing relations of the families and persons of distinction in the county followed.

"The procession was met at the church door by the Rev. William Sherlock, D.D., vicar of Broadmoor, who was assisted by the Very Reverend Archbishop Busby, and the Dean of Smethwick. After the ceremony both the bridal parties breakfasted at the Grange, and shortly afterwards the happy couples departed on their wedding tour, amid the congratulations of their numerous relatives and friends."

Thus far the "Smethwick Standard." Need we add that, of our own knowledge, the married couples fulfilled the condition in which we always leave married people at the end of the fairy tales which delighted our childhood, namely, that "they lived happy ever after." In these cases the sequel was true with the necessary deduction of those transient troubles from which none are free in this chequered life, and which only brighten by their shadowy contrast our sunnier hours. But there are others whose fortunes are involved in our story.

We have told how Reginald Chesterton, shattered in health and spirits, retired to the seclusion of Halliwell House. To do the doctor justice he did the very best for his patient, who improved rapidly under his care. He, however, firmly resisted all attempts to draw him into society, and they were not a few, nor lacking in pertinacity. His hardest trial in this way was a request from his friend Sherlock to attend the festivities on the occasion of his marriage with Anna Perceval. This, indeed, cut him to the quick. How remorse stung him with double piquancy when he thought of his own disgraceful, selfish, and unmanly conduct, albeit undertaken towards such a friend, and how impossible it would be for him to look the woman in the face whose innocence and ignorance he had tried to practise on, that had been so signally and righteously foiled.

There were others, too, who sought to draw him from his self-imposed seclusion. The doctor's wife, as we all know, had two sisters, and while the two married ladies of Drs. Halliwell and Ashton were perpetually contriving excursions wherein their spinster sister's charms should be played off on the doctor's interesting patient Mrs. Colonel Macgregor never lost an opportunity of visiting "her dear son-in-law, the doctor," and intruding herself, accompanied by her sole disposable "girl," upon Reginald's privacy.

The effect of all this was precisely the reverse of what was intended. At first Reginald was polite and cool, then cool and not polite, then abrupt, and finally positively denied himself to these visitors.

We have mentioned in a former part of our story another female inmate of Dr. Halliwell's; this was his daughter Angelina, the mild, gentle, uncomplaining, neglected child of his first wife, whose mission it now was to endure the scolds, hauteur, and ill temper of the second Mrs. Halliwell, to whom she was a sort of humble house companion, little noticed and less cared for.

Angelina was one of those quiet, unobtrusive, gentle, yet cheerful dispositions that, with the exception of an occasional burst of mortification at what she considered her father's indifference to her affectionate advances, and his disrespect to her cherished mother's memory, she gave little outward sign of her inward trouble. Her attention to her father's afflicted inmates and her constant amiable readiness to oblige endeared her to all but those who should have appreciated her good qualities—her stepmother and very-much-married father.

Of course such a person was a "detrimental," as Mrs. Colonel Macgregor termed her, and not to be thought of among persons of consideration. What was then the consternation of the lady-colonel, of Mrs. Doctor Halliwell, of Mrs. Abernethy Ashton, and the desperation of the unwedded Alice, when the doctor, in what he called his "own blunt way" revealed what Mrs. Colonel Macgregor called "the shameless proceedings of that artful hussey, Angelina Halliwell, with that horrid hypocrite, Reginald Chesterton."

The scene was Clanalpine Villa; the time the morning after the return of Bushby Frankland and Cecilia Frankland to the Cedars, from their wedding tour.

"It's all up, Alice, my girl, in the matter of young Chesterton; though it's not quite out of the family after all. Prepare yourself, my gallant mother-in-law, for a heavy blow."

"What the colonel would have called an outflanking movement that has turned all your offensive and defensive—"

"I do not see either the wit or the politeness,

doctor, of these gibes at an honourable profession: one that at any rate ranks above administering pills and potions, applying blisters or prescribing water and wet sheets to imbecile dupes who have more money than brains."

"Thank you, thank you—mille grazie, mia madre bella. But it was my dear Alice here that I addressed more particularly. Well, young Chesterton's gone down to the Cedars for the first time to meet papa, and sister and brother-in-law, Bushby, and to congratulate the happy couple on their return from their wedding tour."

Mrs. Colonel Macgregor expressed herself in no way interested in the proceedings of "those stuck-up people, the Chestertons."

"Oh, but you are though; and so you'll see when I tell you the other half of my news. No sooner was young Chesterton gone, looking fresh as a four-year-old and active as a young deer, thanks to the hygienic treatment of the Sanitarium, and the careful nursing of—"

"Pshaw, Dr. Halliwell! why do you come to me with such stuff. It is not yet the early hour of the morning. I should say you had been taking a glass. How can this possibly interest me?"

"I know you won't like to hear it," persisted the doctor, in a quizzing tone; "but then you would say I ought to have told you if I didn't. Well, then, to cut a long story short, my Angelina came in directly young Chesterton was gone, and, with a face as red as a turkey, asked my consent to her marriage with—"

"The impudent, abominable minx! and did Mr. Reginald—"

"Hold there, mother o' mine; she's my daughter; yes, madam, my daughter, my own flesh and blood; and let me tell you it has often sorely grieved me that I permitted you and your daughters to guess it over one year superior in—"

"Upon my word, doctor, nothing but the excuse of inebriety can palliate such language to me. I—"

"I tell you again, madam, that my daughter Angelina is a lady by birth. Her mother was the gentlest and best of women—"

"All dead wives are," sneered Mrs. Colonel Macgregor.

At this moment reinforcements arrived, in the shape of Mrs. Abernethy Ashton and Mrs. Doctor Halliwell.

Doctor Halliwell, who already felt himself fully matched, fled before these tremendous and overwhelming odds. He snatched his hat and bowed himself out as the "sisters twain" entered. How his character fared in his absence may be easily imagined.

"Les absens ont toujours tort;" but poor Dr. Halliwell's reputation was so beleaguered, bespattered, and besmudged that how it survived that mauveise quart d'heure of scandal can only be explained by its peculiar robustness, which had enabled it to weather many a tempest which would have wrecked weaker and less assured individuals than the versatile and brazen Scotch-German M.D.

Leaving this amiable family party in their noisy embroglio, we now propose to accompany Reginald to the Cedars.

Hearty and sincere congratulations passed on all sides. The squire whose affection for Cecilia had "grown by that it fed on," was almost amusingly uxorious. His joy at the renovated appearance of Reginald was loudly expressed. Cecilia, too, in her more tranquil way, was affectionately cheerful. Ralph Chesterton, too, was another man; and his greeting of his erring son was like that of the father of the prodigal, who "killed for him the fatted calf."

After some conversation Reginald requested a few moments' attentive audience. He began by saying that he felt no power on earth, no kindness of friends, no oblivion of the past, could restore to him his own self-respect and the world's esteem in the circles in which he was known. He had, therefore, resolved, under a slight change of name, to take passage for Australia, and there, in a new world, commence a new career, in which he might restore his forfeited name and fortune.

His father did not combat his arguments, nor seek to shake his resolve, and though Cecilia, with tearful eyes, deplored his proposed departure, she left his future to himself and to the Great Disposer of events.

Bushby Frankland, after a little friendly opposition, also gave in. At this moment a knock at the hall-door was heard. Ralph Chesterton looked at his watch.

"I shouldn't wonder," said he, "if that is your

new servant, Joe Paget. The train is in at six o'clock."

"Joe Paget?" asked Reginald, eagerly.

"Even so," said the squire, laughing. "I looked him up, and engaged him for the stables. But, Reginald, there are accounts to square between you and me. Ousey here is absolute mistress of me and mine. With my goods I thus endow; isn't it, deary, or something like it? Well, that didn't mean all Old Rufford's money, which I won without merit, Cousin Ralph, and you lost without deserving. Your father, Reginald, has a competence, but you ought to have inherited, I again say, Old Rufford's money. Now, you are going to Australia. Neither here nor there can a man start without capital. Ten thousand pounds shall be placed to your credit in the Australian Bank at Melbourne; and may Heaven bless and prosper you, and some day return you to your native land!"

The squire wiped his eye as he turned away.

Reginald bowed in silence. Then turned to his parent.

"Father," said Reginald, solemnly, "it is not good for man to be alone. I propose to marry an Englishwoman, an amiable, affectionate, true-hearted Englishwoman. Angelina Halliwell has been my tender nurse during many weeks of mental and bodily suffering. I have watched her and studied her character. I know her goodness, her simplicity and her pureness of heart, and I love her. I ask your consent to our marriage."

"And you have it freely."

A servant here answered that "the new groom was in the kitchen."

"Show him up," said the squire.

Joe Paget, in a new plain livery, made his appearance.

There was no mistaking Joe's satisfaction at again meeting with Reginald Chesterton.

"I must ask you another favour," said Reginald to the squire.

"Ask and have," was the reply.

"Joe, we have been fellow-sufferers as the victims of a villain. You may reinstate yourself here; I cannot. Would you like, if I have the permission of the squire, to take service with me in a new world, among a new people?"

"To the furthest end of the world, sir," replied Joe, eagerly.

"We are agreed, then, and you will accompany me to Australia."

"Stop a bit. I see another little claim on Old Rufford's money," said the squire, laughing. "Joe, there's fifty pounds a-year life annuity chargeable for you out of my estate. I'll arrange it with the lawyers."

Joe expressed his gratitude.

Ten years afterwards Reginald Chesterton was one of the most extensive sheep farmers in Queensland, a member of the Colonial Legislature, and universally respected.

Joe Paget's last letter stated that he had married, and with his family had settled as stockmaster on one of his master's largest farms in the bush.

The reader will remember Nathaniel Stubbs, Doctor Halliwell's man of all work. A farmer-uncle of Nat. Stubbs died and left that individual £600. Nat. was not without ambition, and he resolved to invest his capital as a job-master and flyman in Broadmoor, a description of tradesman long wanted.

Nat. was not without ambition, and this developed itself in an extraordinary manner. No sooner had he thrown off the doctor's livery and driven a newly painted (second-hand) brougham through the town, and scarcely was the signboard dry which announced "Nathl. Stubbs's Livery and Bait Stables—horses job'd by the day, month, or year—neat Clarencees, Flies, &c.," than a society-quake convulsed Broadmoor. The new Clarence was driven over to Smethwick by Nat. with a lady inside; Nat. himself returned, also inside, seated by that lady—his wedded wife. Her name had been changed from Alice Honoria Euphrosyne Macgregor to Mrs. Nathaniel Stubbs. We draw the curtain on the honour which overspread the inmates of Clanalpine Villa, Halliwell House, and Ashton Lodge at this alliance with the village job-master.

Squire Frankland had in due time a son and heir presented to him by his adored Cecilia, and to him descended, as by lineal right, and by the wills both of his father and of his uncle, Ralph Chesterton—Old Rufford's Money.

THE END.



[THE WATCHER.]

SECRET POWER.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE sound which caused that sudden dread to strike the heart of Vane Vincent, and at the same time inspired him with a wild though vague hope, was a low moan which seemed to come from above and beyond the stairs. With the echoes of that plaintive and agonized voice ringing upon his ear, he had rushed upward, but had not taken three steps ere the light rapidly diminished and left him motionless, surrounded by a hazy gloom, which for a moment rendered his path obscure.

As his eyes became more accustomed to the heavy shade he noticed that the stairs bent to the left, and continued on in that direction, terminating at what appeared to be a solid wall, at a right angle from which and flanking the baluster above was a long, narrow entry. Upon advancing a yard farther he saw that this ended abruptly at the other extreme.

He paused to more carefully note the locality, when a flash of light from an invisible source fell directly across the hall in advance of him, and revealed lying supinely upon the floor an exquisitely formed girl; her luxuriant hair in tangled masses falling over her shoulders, and resting upon the boards in shining, silken waves; her snowy face appearing death-like under the glaring effulgence, and her delicate white hands crossed over her bosom as if in repose.

So quick had come the light that the surgeon's eyes were for an instant blinded; then as he beheld the vision of beauty before him, his face paled, his hands involuntarily clenched, and, moving forward with motion rapid but soft, ejaculated:

"My lost one—my Clarice—I have found you!"

And bending down, while his noble face wore an expression of blended love, thankfulness and solicitude, he chafed her hands and tenderly smoothed her pallid brow, meantime murmuring fond words, and became so absorbed by his great love that he heeded not what was passing around him nor cared for aught but her.

"It is not sleep," he excitedly mused, while anxiety shaded his features, "it is not syncope, but the effects of a foul drug—yes, ether! That means foul play again, but I am with her now, I who love her better than my own life, and death alone shall separate us!"

"Then death it is!" sounded a deep, gruff voice

and simultaneously the place was illumined with light from powerful lanterns which hitherto had been concealed.

The first echo of the voice had not died away ere Vane Vincent was upon his feet, his eyes flashing with anger and unconquerable will, and his strong, muscular arms bared for the fray; but before he could use them they were grasped from the rear and held powerfully.

What, should he be captured, and at Clarice's side! The thought sent the hot blood like lightning through his veins, and, throwing his whole strength into one movement, he bent low, and with the impetus thus gained sprang upward.

It was a grand conception! Its execution was wonderful! It was a feat that would have made an athlete's heart throb with envy and delight, and even his enemies stood mute with surprise and admiration when he burst from their grasp, as the tempest would rend a sapling, and alighted several feet from them, his face flushed, his lips compressed, his arms again extended defiantly. An instant only he stood thus, then his arm shot out, and one of the assailants fell like a log to the floor.

"Curse him—can nothing stop him—can no one hold him?"

After felling his enemy Vane had darted toward Clarice, and was raising her in his arms when the man spoke. He saw not his gesture, and was consequently unprepared to meet the assault of two fresh men, who, darting from a recess near the stairs, where up to this time they had been concealed, sprang furiously upon him, and rained a perfect shower of cowardly blows on his head and his arms.

This vigorous attack compelled him to release Clarice in order to free himself, and letting her down as gently as circumstances would permit, he drew back and, with a crashing blow, sent one of his enemies away groaning; he turned and caught the other by the neck, and held him until he begged for mercy.

"Cowards!" exclaimed in rage one who seemed the chief. "I will do what you dare not, what you cannot, cravens!"

And, rushing forward, he struck the surgeon upon the head with a heavy pistol, and the brave man fell to the floor stunned. The eyes of the assailant shone with triumph, and he jeered at his companions, but they were men when compared with him; he had proved himself a coward—a contemptible coward.

In an instant Vane returned to consciousness and arose to his feet, when one of the men placed his foot behind him; another gave him a quick, violent

"shoulder push," and he fell backward. At a sign from the chief one seated himself upon the surgeon's breast, another clasped his right wrist with both hands and bore down upon it with all his might, and another held his left in a similar manner; thus three men were occupied and taxed to their utmost keeping one secure.

The female now appeared, and, taking Clarice in her arms, moved toward the stairs, and Vane Vincent lying there saw the rough arms of the virago around his darling's waist, saw her head down and kiss the white brow with her coarse lips, and the sight maddened him. With his utmost strength he tried to break away; strove to raise himself, until the muscles stood out like cords upon his arms; struggled to twist his hands free, until his joints cracked; endeavored to throw his enemy from his chest, until the muscles of his face swelled most painfully, and his whole frame was in a tremor of exhaustion. Mortal could do no more, and yet, in his rage, in his desperation, in his despair, in his frenzy, he still sought to break away, to rescue his Clarice.

In taunting glee the chief raised his arm, and pointing to the virago, who had reached the head in the stairs with her precious burden, he ejaculated:

"Ha, ha! she goes from you for ever, she goes to be the wife of one who will make her life a curse to her. And you, you are ours, ours to torture! Ha, ha, ha! my English Hercules, who will save you now?"

"I will! I, another Englishman!"

In the clear, rich, ringing tones of the artist's voice these words echoed and re-echoed, and the next moment he dashed through the secret door into the hall, lifted a heavy club, and struck the chief senseless.

The others arose, and were about to resist, when Signor Luis, followed by three men, rushed in, and formed a striking, thrilling tableau as they stood with pistols presented over the angry and trembling miscreants.

"Heaven bless you, Matthew!"

In deep, fervent tones these words left the surgeon's lips, then, with a howl of rage, he leaped over the stairs, tore his beloved from the grasp of the virago, and dealt the latter a blow which sent her rolling down over the stairs—down—down, until she lay bruised and bleeding at the foot.

Tenderly the surgeon carried Clarice, with rapture he gazed into her face, and with thankfulness he thought:

"Safe at last, my Clarice!"

When he reached the landing he saw that the

villains were pisioned and ready to be taken to their proper place—the jail.

Until this moment he had not thought of the old man whom he had met in the square room below, but now the remembrance struck his mind with peculiar force, and drawing the keys from his pocket he said to Signor Luis:

"There is one more we want, you will probably find him in some of the subterranean passages which lead from a trap-door in the room below; these keys will open that and others."

Signor Luis received them, assured him that the person should not escape, and then congratulated him upon his safety.

During their conversation the artist had stood silent, gazing with mingled affection and gladness into the face of his friend, while a heavy weight seemed slowly rising from his heart, and his spirit once more became light and buoyant.

As Vane turned away he grasped his hand, and in a voice quivering somewhat with manly feeling earnestly said:

"Vane, you are with me again, alive. I might try to tell you how thankful I am, but I should fail. Since you have been gone, the fear that you would die by the hand of an assassin in this foreign land has kept me in a state of continual agitation, but—but that does not express it! I will say no more, Vane. You can imagine how I have felt."

"I can, Matthew," rejoined the surgeon, warmly pressing his hand, "and I hope I appreciate it. Now tell me, please, where I am, and how you came here."

"Why, this is the back part of Lander's house, which until this night was supposed to be in ruin, decay and uselessness. That tells you how I came here; the rest is too long a story to weary you with until you are in a position of comfort."

He opened the secret door as he spoke, which revealed another pair of stairs, and an entry similar though smaller.

"There, Vane, is the stairway which leads from the kitchen entry, and which has always been kept locked. As I shut this door you will observe that the wall appears whole and jointless. It is an excellent piece of deceit as well as workmanship, and has been carried on for years, though it has affected our interests for a few days only. But I must talk no more. You are worn and haggard, and Clarice, though not very heavy, must be a burden."

The surgeon directed his dark blue eyes upon the pale and beautiful face which nestled upon his broad breast, smoothed with a respectful tenderness the fair and finely rounded arm which was unconsciously entwined about his neck, and then, looking up at his friend with a half-reproving smile, said:

"She a burden! Ah, Matthew, when I think so, I shall indeed be unhappy."

The artist was actually jealous of the maiden because she attracted the attention of his friend from him, more, he thought, than there was any necessity for; and with just a tinge of impatience he answered:

"Perhaps you did not hear what I've been relating to you; you expressed no surprise; indeed, you did not answer me."

"Surprise, Matthew! When I tell you of the scenes I have witnessed, the events that have occurred, you will not wonder that the feeling is dead within me."

The artist made no reply, and both walked on in silence until they reached the hall fronting the drawing-room. Here Vane paused, and perplexedly said:

"What shall I do with Clarice? She will not probably awake for hours; for the anæsthetic that was administered to her is very powerful."

"She slept with the housekeeper, I believe. All that you can do is to carry her up and place her upon the bed."

"She will not rest much, I think," muttered Vane, irritably. "This comes of having only one woman in the house."

And with these words he ascended the stairs, moved softly into the room of Mrs. Lennox, and placed Clarice upon the bed at her side.

As he turned to go out he saw his reflection in the mirror, and, starting back, he involuntarily exclaimed:

"Good Heavens! I hardly know myself. It is a mercy that she was insensible, for she would have been terrified had she seen me. I knew that I looked bad, but did not imagine that I was positively frightful!"

And in truth he was, for his brow was disfigured by a spot of blood, over which his hair hung in confusion; his eyes were rendered wild by dark circles beneath, which were produced by his extreme excitement and care; his shirt was torn in front, exposing a portion of his breast, upon which were the imprints of fingers; and his arms were bare, and red in

spots, while at his shoulders his shirt hung in threads.

"I have been in a few battles, Matthew," he remarked, as he rejoined his friend, "but I think I never looked so much like a genuine guerilla as I do at this moment."

"Or a dying stage villain," laughed the artist; "but that can soon be remedied. It proves, however, what I have constantly thought, that you were engaged in some desperate fighting. I knew if your own strength and skill could avail, that you would return safe, nevertheless I was anxious. But come, Lander is in our room, he has shared my hopes and fears."

"I will go and improve my appearance, then I shall return and keep guard before the door of her room for the remainder of the night."

"There is not the least necessity for this," objected the artist; "she is in no danger now; besides, you are in no condition for such a duty."

"Matthew," replied the surgeon, impressively, "I have endured too much grief, dread, peril, and despair to let her be spirited away in the hour of my triumph and happiness. I know more of these foes than you do—know that they will not cease their evil efforts until crushed."

"But they are powerless," remonstrated Matthew, vehemently, "and you are weary, nearly exhausted. I beg that you will sleep and let me watch."

"No, no, Matthew. I know the kind spirit which prompts your generous offer, but surely I would be worthy of no woman could I not keep awake to protect her; much less would it appear that I loved her did I allow another to take my place."

The artist, who, not being a lover, could not have a just appreciation of the feelings of one, considered the proposition in itself very foolish, the execution of it a strikingly ridiculous affair, and the surgeon's defence of it equally absurd. He did not, however, express these complimentary opinions, but he argued and entreated until the surgeon was forced to say:

"There, Matthew, if you will cease I will promise to sleep one hour to-night and one hour in the morning—you to take my place as sentinel at both times."

Only partially satisfied, yet well aware that it would be futile to importune him farther, the artist silently acquiesced, and they passed on to their room.

Mr. Lander, who was standing near the window, turned suddenly as he heard the door open, and, seeing the blood upon the surgeon's face, darted forward and anxiously, apprehensively exclaimed:

"My dear friend, you are here again, thank Heaven for that—but you are injured, you are—"

"Only a little tired and greatly soiled, my dear Lander," interposed Vane, cheerfully, as he grasped the sculptor's hand and shook it cordially.

Earnestly, thankfully the sculptor replied, and for a few moments they conversed as friends only can, after which the surgeon bathed, dressed his hair, assumed new and fresh garments, and then remarked:

"Now, Matthew, please relate to me how Clarice came here, and all the circumstances attending it, but be brief."

The artist readily complied, and gave him an account of the events up to a few hours previous, when Clarice retired from the drawing-room, concluding with:

"She had been gone from the room about a half-hour, when the door opened and Signor Luis entered. I was surprised to see him, and hurriedly asked him why he came. He informed me that he had made the driver confess to a portion of our enemy's plans, which revealed the facts in relation to this house. He knew of the drugging of the two women, but proposed to follow the abductor of Clarice, and see if by that means we could obtain knowledge of you. To this I at once assented, and removing our boots we crept noiselessly downstairs. Again was I astonished when I found that the detective had already secreted men in the kitchen. We watched and followed. I need not tell you more."

The warm clasp of the surgeon's hand was the expression of gratitude to his friend for his rescue of Clarice and himself, then he sank into a soft arm-chair and was soon asleep, while the artist paced to and fro before the door of the maiden's room.

An hour passed, and Vane Vincent was upon his feet, much refreshed by his short rest. Presently he ascended and relieved his friend, and until the gray dawn appeared over the ruins of the ancient city he guarded that room, for it was the setting of his priceless gem—the casket that held his second life.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE bright amber beams of the glorious orb of day were falling gracefully aslant the wide, white

brow of Vane Vincent as he lay upon his couch, his eyes closed and his features tranquil under the soothing power of sleep. Until four o'clock he had continued his self-imposed duty, at which time the artist forced him to retire, and now he slept as one who could live only in slumber, whose every power, mental and physical, was absorbed in woolly sweet oblivion, whose every breath seemed to carry a thanksgiving for rest.

"I will not, I cannot find it in my heart to arouse him," mused the artist, as he bent over and gazed down upon that grandly intellectual face, "for he needs rest more than he does kind words. Confound it! it is a mystery to me why Vane should fly off and fall in love! Heigh-ho! so the world goes; my time may come, but I can't bring myself round to the belief."

And with these words the artist seated himself, lighted a cigar, took up a paper, and divided his attention between each and glanced at his friend until his watch indicated the hour of nine; then he partially arose, but sank back into the chair with a dubious shake of his head, and soliloquized:

"No, no, let him sleep. Clarice can wait, and perhaps, after all, she does not love him—who knows? In that case the meeting will not be very pleasant and should be put off as long as possible. There is one thing about Vane's love that proves to me that it is real and sensible—he does not lose any sleep over it, that is, after he gets to bed. I like that. I should be very sorry to see Vane sighing, prattling attitudes of devotion, taking observations of the moon, and talking continually of rose bowers, silver lakes, fathomless eyes, and all that sort of thing. I should feel under the painful necessity of despatching him to some private lunatic asylum, where, like the thin boy, he could be fed on rice and electric shocks—poor Vane—poor Benedict—ha—ha—ha!"

And Matthew laughed pleasantly, glanced affectionately at his sleeping friend, and then blowing a cloud of smoke into the air, once more gave his attention to his paper.

So interested did he become in his reading that he noted not the passage of time, and was somewhat startled by hearing the surgeon's voice.

"The sun is high—it must be late. Say, Matthew, what time is it?"

The artist dropped his paper, smiled rather guiltily and slowly drawing his watch from his pocket, hesitatingly answered:

"Well, n-o-t so v-e-r-y late, about ten and a-half!"

"What!" the surgeon was upon his feet in an instant. "How could you let me sleep so long when you knew that I ought to have been downstairs at ten? I cannot possibly get dressed before eleven."

"Never mind, Vane, you can have more time for anticipation, it is generally sweeter than the realization."

The surgeon did not reply, but the words gave birth to a contingency which had not before occurred to him—what if Clarice could not reciprocate his affection?

He stood still a moment while a chill seemed to fall upon his heart, and diffuse a feeling of desolation over his mind, then by a great effort dispelling his fears, and calling forth fond hope to cheer him, he hurriedly continued his toilet.

For a few moments Matthew regarded him reflectively, then raising his sparkling black eyes, and smiling half seriously, half merrily, he said:

"Vane, I've been speculating on the effects of love; wondering whether a man who is thus afflicted—excuse me, affected—feels like jumping overboard one minute, and swinging on the strings of a balloon—pardon me—sailing through the realms of space the next. Can you tell me?"

"I have experienced no such foolish and extravagant feelings," replied the surgeon, gravely, "but that loneliness which once oppressed my heart has gone from it, and before my mental vision, Matthew, now I see a home of harmony, something I have never yet known."

"What?"

"It is true, Matthew, I never told you of it before; but my mother dying when I was very young, my father married again, and after that I knew no peace. What I am I have made myself."

"My dear friend, forgive my levity. May Heaven bless you, and give you such a home as your heart yearns for."

"Thank you, Matthew, you are a true friend. You are sincere. I have nothing to forgive, for your words were both playful, and had not my thoughts run back over years I should not have answered as seriously as I did. Now I am ready. Ere long, Matthew, I shall be very sad or very happy."

And with these words the surgeon left the room. As he reached the drawing-room door he paused, for his heart had begun to beat unnaturally fast, and his breath came short and quick.

A minute passed, and instead of becoming more composed his strange excitement had increased, and he actually trembled. He tried to control himself, and fanning that he had succeeded he opened the door and entered.

Clarice was seated near the window, her hands clasped before her, and her lustrous eyes directed meditatively upon the floor, while her face was very pale, and wore a certain listless look—the former engendered by her extreme mental suffering, the latter the effect of the narcotic which had been administered to her on the preceding night.

It was evident that she had seen him enter, for her hands were strained together an instant, and her lips quivered slightly as they became compressed; then she looked up with a passive smile partaking somewhat of surprise, and rising gracefully, said:

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Vincent, I desired to thank you for the inestimable service you have rendered me."

Vane bowed and tried to speak, but the words died on his lips, and the peculiar tremulousness which had before assailed him now became more violent, and even the determined efforts of his powerful volition could not check it.

His eyes were upon her during this instant of emotions so singular and conflicting, this instant which seemed an hour, and he could not remove them, they seemed transfixed by some unknown but potent power.

Then he involuntarily started forward, eagerly clasped her hand, and the rush of feelings which had surged over his heart now found vent in the intense, almost breathless words:

"Clarice! Clarice! I love you!"

Her eyes dilated, and then partially closed, her glistening teeth pressed her scarlet lips, while a cold shudder crept slowly over her, and drawing her hand hastily away, and pressing it to her brow, she wildly exclaimed:

"Oh, why did you tell me of this—why? I cannot listen—I must not think! Leave me at once, I pray you!"

"Never, Clarice, never!" ejaculated the surgeon, in low, fervent tones, "but I will stay with you to cheer and protect. You shall tell me what gives you fear, what causes you this agony, and I will comfort you. Oh, do not seek to turn away, to look coldly on me, for heart cannot deceive heart."

"You assume a great deal," she interrupted, frigidly. "You are bold, unkind, and—"

"Clarice!" the tone was stern, but tinged with a deep, sad pathos, "this is no time for conventional equestrian or the exercise of foolish pride. I love you with honest, manly feelings. I know that you return it, and I expect womanly conduct from you, not the freakish nonsense of girlhood. My time of romance is past. You have all that is dear to me in your hands—cast it away now and we are both miserable for life. I hold before you no false guise to please your fancy, I come as I am, as I always shall be. I seek not to humble your pride; I only desire that you and I, as man and woman, shall appear to each other as we are, that we shall not be ashamed of a love which is good and holy, that no shallow reserve shall make us appear as foolish to each other, instead of acting out the part of a noble heart, made more noble by its emotions."

Was not this a singular wooing? What could Clarice say? Injured pride, romance destroyed—for all women are more or less imaginative, and delight in fond scenes on such occasions—a rebellious spirit, and love struggling together, rendered her mind confused; then anger flashed through, and she was about to obey its cruel promptings when her eyes met those of the surgeon fixed pleadingly upon her, and in their clear depths she saw the pure, affectionate heart, the shining, noble soul. An instant she wavered, then love conquered every other feeling, and she sank weeping on his breast.

The eyes of the strong man became dim, for he knew the contest that had agitated her mind, and had marked its progress in suspense; now it was over, and she, who for so long a time had been separated from him—she for whom he had braved dangers multifarious and unknown, now lay upon his breast, her heart beating against his. He looked upward as he thought of all this, and breathed a prayer of thanksgiving, then, tenderly smoothing her brow.

(To be continued.)

THE native servants who have been engaged to act as coachmen and carriage attendants to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in India have been dressed in scarlet coats of the usual shape worn by all natives alike; but on the breast is embroidered in white the Prince of Wales's feathers and motto, over which is the crown in gold lace embroidered on crimson velvet. The

tassels of the coat are bound with gold lace, and the wristbands are also adorned in a similar manner, but the lace is deeper and is carried nearly to the elbow on the under part of the arm.

A STORY FOR THE LADIES.

A CERTAIN Swiss Captain of Grenadiers was determined to try if he could not get a wife; and, as he had no fortune of his own, he reasoned that it was quite necessary his intended should have enough for them both. The captain was near six feet high, and was allowed to have had the most martial pair of whiskers of any grenadier in the company to which he belonged. To curl these whiskers, to curl and twist them round his forefinger, and to admire them in the glass, formed the chief occupation and delight of his life.

Accordingly, after a little diligent inquiry, a young lady was found, exactly such an one as we may well suppose a person with his views would be glad to find. She was tolerably handsome, not more than three and twenty; with a good fortune; and, what was the best of the story, this fortune was entirely at her own disposal. Our captain having found means to introduce himself as a suitor, was incessant in his endeavours to carry his cause. His tongue was constantly running in praise of her superlative charms.

One day, as he was beseeching his goddess to send him to pluck the diamond from the nose of the Great Mogul, and to present it to her divinityship, or suffer him to step and steal the Empress of China's enchanted slipper, or the Queen of Sheba's cockatoo, as a small testimony of what he would undertake to prove his love, she, after a little hesitation, addressed him thus:

"The protestations which you make, captain, convince me that there is nothing you would not do to oblige me; I, therefore, am willing to become yours if you will perform one thing which I shall request."

"Tell me, immaculate angel," cried our son of gunpowder, "tell me what it is! Though before you speak be certain it is already done. Is it to find the seal of Solomon? to catch the Phoenix? or draw your chariot to church with unicorns? What is the impossible act I will not undertake for such a reward?"

"No, captain," replied the fair one, "I shall enjoin nothing impossible. The thing I desire you can do with the utmost ease; it will not cost you five minutes' trouble; and yet, were it not for your most positive assurances, from what I have observed, I should almost doubt your compliance."

"Speak! say! empress of my parched heart! what must I perform?"

"Not much, captain; only to cut off your whiskers! that's all."

Be so kind, reader, as to imagine the captain's utter astonishment.

"My whiskers, madam! Cut off my whiskers! Excuse me—cut off my whiskers! Pardon me, madam—anything else—anything that mind can, or cannot imagine, or tongue describe. My whiskers, madam, are the last thing I should have supposed you would have wished me to sacrifice. There is not a woman, married or single—maid, wife, or widow—that does not admire my whiskers!"

"May be so, sir; but if you marry me you must cut them off!"

"And is there no other way? Must I never hope to be happy with you unless I part with my whiskers?"

"Never!"

"Well, then, madam, farewell! I would not part with a single hair of my whiskers if Catherine, the Czarina, Empress of all the Russias, would make me King of the Calmucks; and so good morning."

Had all young ladies in like circumstances equal penetration they might generally rid themselves, with equal ease, of the interested and unprincipled coxcombs by whom they are pestered.

WE are able to state that the trustees and directors of the National Gallery have accepted the munificent bequest of pictures by the old masters made by the late Mr. Wynn Ellis, and upon the conditions contained in the will. The pictures accepted will be hung in a separate room for ten years.

ON her way to Nice the other day the Princess Dolgorouky wore a pelisse made entirely of ermine studded all over with diamonds set in turquoises. The cloaks which are to be seen every afternoon in the Bois, on the fair shoulders of the Princesses de Sagan, Madame de Talleyrand, Madame de Rothschild, represent each in fur a value of 4,000, sterling.

IT is a curious illustration of the ups and downs of life that one of the "upper ten," not uncon-

neted with the country of Perth, recently became a bankrupt. His "establishment" was broken up, and last week his house was sold. The buyer, who paid 25,000*l.*, was formerly a butler in the bankrupt's employment, who saved money, became the owner of a paying eating-house, and is now about to turn the aristocratic dwelling-house in which he was a servant into an hotel.

FACETIE.

A PERPLEXED COUNTRYMAN.

A few days since, a gentleman connected with one of our railroad corporations, while taking a ride through one of our country towns, accompanied by his servant, had the misfortune to have his vehicle smashed up, and himself and companion thrown violently to the ground, by his horse taking fright and running away. The gentleman was somewhat bruised but not seriously, his principal loss being that of his wig; and on picking himself up he found his servant in a much worse condition; holding to his head with the blood trickling through his fingers, and his master's wig in his other hand, which he was surveying with most ludicrous alarm and horror.

"Well, John," said his master, "are you much hurt?"

"Hurt. Do you see the top of my head?"

John, in his terror and confusion, had mistaken his master's portable head-piece for his own natural scalp, and evidently regarded his last hour as arrived.

NOTHING LIKE PRUDENCE.

MARIA (loquiter): "My dear Charles, before we think of marrying, I must ask you what you have?"

CHARLES: "My dear Maria, I will tell you frankly that all I have in the world is a drum and a cricket-bat; but papa has promised me a bow and arrows, and a pony, if I am a good boy."

MARIA: "Oh! my dear Charles, we could never live and keep house upon that!"

The old gentleman who spent a fortune in endeavouring to hatch colts from horse chestnuts is now cultivating the egg plant, with the view of raising chickens from them.

Two Irishmen, in crossing a field, came in contact with a donkey, who was making the welkin ring with his unearthly braying. Jimmy stood a moment in astonishment, but turning to Dan, who seemed as much enraptured with the song as himself remarked: "It's a fine large ear that bird has for music. Dan, but surely he's got a mighty bad cowl!"

SHORTY DIALOGUE.

A: "Will you have the kindness to take my overcoat in your carriage to town?"

B: "With pleasure; but how will you get it again?"

A: "Oh, very easily; I shall remain in it!"

Not unlike a circumstance in which we were once a party. Having occasion to send to a friend in sister city a few books, we asked a neighbour who was going to the same place in the morning if he would oblige us by taking them. He kindly assented, with the proviso, "if he could get them into his trunk."

The parcel was sent—somewhat larger than was anticipated—in a square bundle, and arrived safe at its destination.

Some time afterward meeting the friend who had obliged us (there were no convenient expresses in those days) we thanked him for his courtesy, and asked him if he found any difficulty in carrying the package?

"Oh, not at all!" he said: "It was too large to go in the trunk, but I managed it very well, notwithstanding. My trunk is not a very big one; so I opened my bundle, and there was abundance of room inside for my trunk!"

TRUE POLITENESS; OR, THE CABMAN OF THE FUTURE.

CABBY: "Four-wheeler, ma'am?"

OLD LADY: "No, thank you, I'm waiting for an 'Atlas.'"

CABBY: "Ah, indeed, ma'am; but won't you step in and take a seat in our shelter till the omnibus comes up, ma'am?"—Punch's Almanack, 1876.

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.—No fewer than five million four thousand and twenty-seven valentines were received and delivered by the patent postal telegraphic lightning apparatus within the radius of the metropolis before six o'clock, a.m.—Punch's Almanack, 1876.

DIARIES FOR THE YEAR.—THE THIRTY.

JANUARY.—Having nothing better to do, started a bank. Christened it the Royal English, Welsh, Irish, and Scottish Banking Association. Appointed agents in all the principal towns in the United Kingdom and the colonies. Agents' premium, 100*l.*

FEBRUARY.—The bank having failed, turned my attention to foreign countries. Got a concession to establish railways in the North Pole. Immense rush of poor curates and lone widows to invest their "little alls" in my speculation.—Punch's Almanack, 1876.

"EVIL COMMUNICATIONS," ETC.

SCENE.—Mrs. Lyon Hunter's drawing-room during a lecture on "Women's Rights."

MODEST YOUTH (In a whisper to young lady looking for a seat): "Er—excuse me, but do you believe in the equality of the sexes, Miss Wilhelmina?"

YOUNG LADY: "Most certainly I do, Mr. Jones."

MODEST YOUTH: "Haw! In that case of course I needn't give you up my chair!"—Punch.

"DEAR! DEAR!"

ANCIENT MAIDEN: "What is the price of beef to-day, Mr. Frost?"

BUTCHER: "Fifteen pence a pound, miss."

ANCIENT MAIDEN: "Fifteen pence a pound! Why you are a dear butcher!"

BUTCHER: "Why—eh—yes—thank you, miss, that's just what Mrs. Frost used to say before I married her!"—Punch.

"MARCH OF REFINEMENT," 1875.

BROWN (behind the age but hungry): "Give me the bill of fare, waiter."

HEAD WAITER: "Beg pardon, sir?"

BROWN: "The bill of fare."

HEAD WAITER: "The what, sir! Oh!—eh!—yes!"—(to subordinate)—"Chawies, bring this—this—a—gentleman—the menu!"—Punch.

THE CYNIC'S CALENDAR.

(Melancholy musing on the miseries of the month.)

JANUARY.

January brings its bills,

So the year begins with ills.

If one's credit be precarious,

Hilary finds us not hilarious.

Frequent winds from S. and W.

Blow no good, but tease and trouble you.

Frosts to nip and wet to weary,

Nights all dark and days all dreary,

Most things that may plague and pain us

Meet us with the month of Janus.

—Punch's Almanack, 1875.

THE COLD SHOULDER.

Jones had prepared himself for a home dinner to his liking. He sat down in his dining-room at peace with all the world, and said:

"Now, Hannah, bring the cold mutton. No hot meat for me this weather."

Hannah hesitated for a minute and said:

"I have given it away, sir."

"Given it away! Given my dinner away!"

"Yes, sir; you said if any tramps called I was to give them the cold shoulder."

SUSPICIOUS TAILOR to a suspected customer:

"Make you a coat, sir? Oh, yes, sir, with the greatest pleasure. There, just stand in that position, please, and look right upon that sign while I take your measure." Sign reads—(Terms Cash.)

"Boy, is your name Bob?" "No." "What is it, then?" "Why, sister Moll calls me 'Bub'—brother Sam calls me 'Will'—mother calls me 'Sonny'—but dad laughs, and says that I ought to be called Bill of rights."

ACCOMMODATING.

SWELL: "Aw! kind of this cabman, y' know!"

"Says if I'm going his way 'don't mind letting me go with him! But if I'm not going his way, he'll see me—ah—blowed first! I'm going his way, so it's awanged that we go 't'gathar! Aw! obliging fellah!"—Punch.

A FAVOURITE BOOK WITH GIRLS.—Book mislaid.

ATTENDANT (to stout customer): "Turtle-soup, ma'am? Yes, ma'am. And a outlet afterwards?"

ATTENDANT (to thin customer): "Those are the penny buns. Help yourself, please!"—Punch.

COWARDLY INUENDO.

DARBY: "Wot d'yer say? A-going to water the milk, am I? Well, your mother don't do it—oh, no, not at all!"

JOAN: "No, that she don't, sure-ly!"

DARBY: "Ah, then if she don't water that there milk, tell her she did ought to have them blessed old cows of hers thatched, 'cause they must let in the rain!"—Punch.

THE quick reasoning power of the German is happily exemplified in the above incident. Here you have a native of Berlin, who in the act of taking a match out of his pocket to light his pipe, drops the match and lights another to look for it. Whether or not he was successful nobody has ever heard.—Judy.

LIBERAL.—"Sure," said a man, rubbing his head with delight at the prospect of a present from his employer, "I always mane to do my duty." "I believe you," replied his employer, "and, therefore, I shall make you a present of all you have stolen from me during the year." "I thank your honour, and may

all your friends and acquaintances treat you as liberally."

A WOMAN who was turned out of her house for non-payment of rent went out in good style, putting on silks and jewellery, and having her hair frizzed in extra style for the occasion.

IN THE WRONG SHOP.

Not long since a man, evidently a stranger in town, might have been seen making eager inquiries of different individuals whom he met. He had wandered down on 'Change, and people in that precinct had business enough of their own to attend to. Finally, however, a pleasant-faced gentleman listened patiently to the stranger's interrogatories, and, with a genial smile, pointed out to him the way he should go.

A few minutes later the countryman walked into a banking-house, and proceeded deliberately to divest himself of hat, coat, and cravat. This done, he turned to the cashier, who had been regarding the scene with amazement, and with a look and a nod of dignified authority said:

"I say, hadn't you better be fetchin' the hot water?"

"What do you want—a hot toddy?"

"Toddy be blowed! No; I want to be shaved."

"Well, my dear man, you are in the wrong shop. This is a bank, sir, not a barber-shop."

"Bank!" repeated the stranger, somewhat crest-fallen. "Dang it all! a chap out here—and he looked like a gentleman—told me it was a shaving shop."

CIRCUMSTANCE A LAW.

How many things in daily life,

Its projects and its fancies,

Its sorrows and its transient joys

Are due to circumstances?

The fresh'ning gale that speeds the ship,

The calm that but delays it—

A word, a look, may change our lot

As circumstance essays it.

We think our plans are for the best,

And sow our seeds quite gaily,

We water and enrich the soil,

Then watch for promise daily.

One seedling fails! A tiny worm

Has changed its whole condition;

Another sends its fair green shaft

Up, up to sweet fruition.

Night comes from out a sunny sky

Without a sign of warning,

When, lo! an idle breeze sends far

The clouds, and gives us morning.

And so with froe, irreverent breath.

We talk of fortune's "chances,"

Not knowing that Heaven's law supreme

Governs all circumstances.

Too blind to know the ways and means

While doing earthly duty,

By which Heaven blends the warp and

wool

To make this world of beauty.

M. A. K.

GEMS.

THOUGH sometimes small evils, are like invisible

insects, yet the chief secret of comfort lies in not

suffering trifles to vex one, and in prudently culti-

vating an undergrowth of small pleasures; since

very great ones, alas! are let not on long leases.

It is the nature of the creature that makes the

honeysuckle yield poison to the spider and honey

to the bee; so with our tempers—the same object

that will excite a benevolent and kindly feeling in

one person produces in another malevolence and

spite.

A CHURLISH man will naturally think worse of

human nature than it deserves. As there are some

flowers which never open but when the sun shines

upon them, so there are many hearts whose good

qualities must be drawn out by sympathy and kind-

ness.

THE most agreeable of all companions is a simple,

frank man, without any high pretensions to any op-

pressive greatness; one who loves life and under-

stands the use of it; obliging alike at all hours;

above all, of a golden temper, and steadfast as an

anchor. For such a one we gladly exchange the

greatest genius, the most brilliant wit, the pro-

foundest thinker.

STATISTICS.

TAXATION.—Mr. Paget has obtained a return

relating to Property and Income-Tax Assessment,

Poor-rate, etc., from 1814-15 to 1873-74. In the first year the amount of property and profits assessed was 168,234,808*l.*, and increased to 427,611,490*l.* in 1874. Returns are given in reference to the poor-rate assessment and poor-rate expenditure over the same period. In 1814-15 the relief to the poor only amounted to 5,418,846*l.*, and for all other purposes 2,090,008*l.* The total poor-rate expenditure in that year was 7,508,854*l.*, and in 1873-74 the relief to the poor was only 7,664,957*l.*; for other purposes (generally), 4,408,909*l.*, and 777,141*l.* (especially) highway rate transferred to the poor rate. The total poor-rate expenditure in 1874 was 12,851,007*l.*

NAVAL SAVINGS BANKS.—The accounts of deposits in Naval Savings Banks show that on the 31st of March, 1874, the balance due to depositors was 108,825*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.* for deposits, and 4,272*l.* 7*s.* 8*d.* for interest. Of this sum of 108,098*l.* 1*s.* 2*d.*, 18,036*l.* 1*s.* 2*d.* was invested in consols, an amount of over 29,000*l.* having already been invested in like manner, and about 38,000*l.* in Madras Railway Stock. 22,058*l.* was in the hands of Her Majesty's Paymaster-General, and a deficit of 799*l.* 12*s.* 8*d.* had been made good by a grant provided for in the Navy Estimates. The number of accounts open on the 31st of March, 1874, was 7,694.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES

COUGH REMEDY.—Take one ounce of Irish moss, soak it as you would for blanc mange, then boil it ten minutes in two quarts of water and juice of six lemons; sweeten to taste, and strain. Drink it freely; it will nourish and relieve.

BANBURY CAKES.—Make a good puff paste and roll it out thin, divide it into equal parts, and cover one-half over with Banbury mince-meat, made as follows:—Wash and dry $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of currants, and mix them with 2 oz. of beef suet, chopped as fine as possible, a little nutmeg, a $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of candied orange peel shred very fine, 3 oz. of ratafia, crushed up, and a slip of lemon peel. Mix all well together, and when required use it to spread over your paste; then moisten the edge with the white of an egg, cover the other paste over it, press it together, and mark it out in oval forms. Glaze it over with the white of egg and pounded sugar, and bake it on a tin in a well heated oven for half an hour. When done, divide the cakes with a sharp knife the moment they are taken from the oven, and serve them when required, hot or cold. Or the paste may be cut into rounds with a cutter, some of the mince laid on each, covered with puff paste, and closed in the form of an oval, placing the join underneath, with sifted sugar over them.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE American papers state that Mr. Paul Morphy, the celebrated chess-player, is in an asylum at New Orleans, hopelessly insane.

CEASAR's camp on Wimbledon Common is to be preserved, the local authorities having succeeded in an action to restrain the owner from using the materials for building purposes.

THE Sultan of Turkey is said to be enraged beyond measure with the English Government for their purchase in Egypt. He looks at it as the first attempt to make the Khedive a vassal of England rather than of Turkey.

COLONEL VILLETT, the aide-de-camp of Marshal Bismarck, who aided in his escape, has finished the period of imprisonment to which he was sentenced, and has become a wine merchant, in order to earn a living, as he has been deprived of the right to a pension.

THE number of railway accidents during November last was twenty-nine, fifteen of which were collisions, two from the careless loading of trucks, and seven from carriage "jumping," or leaving the rails. Four persons were killed, 10 dangerously injured, 114 more or less seriously hurt, and 146 cut, bruised, and shaken.

THE Prussian Parliament blows hot blows cold. The other day they were compelled to adjourn in consequence of the outbreak of a fire in the building. Two days after the House had to adjourn in consequence of the intense cold which was produced by "new arrangements in the ventilation." That German Parliament seems a difficult affair.

A MONUMENTAL fountain is shortly to be erected on the Place de la Bastille. It is to have a circular form, and will occupy the place on which stood the police office, recently demolished. No better position for a fountain could be found than that immense square, of which the uniformity is now rather monotonous. A double row of trees will, at the same time, be planted on the north side, and this also will prove an important and advantageous addition.

CONTENTS.

| | Page | | Page |
|--------------------|------|----------------------|------|
| THE ISLAND MYSTERY | 217 | CIRCUMSTANCE A | 239 |
| THE TWO WIVES | 220 | LAW | 239 |
| RULES FOR HER | 220 | GEMS | 239 |
| HUNTING | 220 | STATISTICS | 239 |
| TWICE SAVED | 221 | MISCELLANEOUS | 239 |
| SCIENCE | 222 | | |
| FRENCH POLISHING | 223 | | |
| THE DRAMA | 224 | OLD RUFFORD'S MONEY | 637 |
| ROTH'S FLIRTATION | 224 | commenced in | 637 |
| HE LOVES ME: HE | 225 | BURIED SECRETS, com- | 637 |
| LOVES ME NOT | 225 | menced in | 637 |
| THE BARONET'S SON | 229 | HE LOVES ME: HE | 647 |
| ON LOVE AND HATE | 229 | LOVES ME NOT, com- | 647 |
| Snowdrift.—A STORY | 232 | menced in | 647 |
| FOR CHRISTMAS | 232 | SECRET POWERS, com- | 656 |
| OLD RUFFORD'S | | menced in | 656 |
| MONEY; OR, WOM | | THE BARONET'S SON; | 658 |
| WITHOUT MERRY; | | ON LOVE AND HATE, | 658 |
| LOST WITHOUT DE- | | commenced in | 658 |
| SERVING | 234 | Snowdrift.—A STORY | |
| SECRET POWER | 235 | FOR CHRISTMAS, com- | 658 |
| FACTS | 238 | menced in | 658 |

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

O. M.—You have taken great pains with the verses, but the metre is incorrect. Try again.

E. X. A.—Read the story again. It is very interesting and worth a closer study than you have given it.

G. F.—Your question will be answered in due time through the columns of our Journal under "Notices to Correspondents."

W. J. D.—Answers to correspondents are given on the last page of our Journal. Many thanks for your confidence in our advice. If you send the particulars we shall be happy to insert the notice in the usual way.

F. M. H.—No, we think not. A low black one is generally worn by gentlemen. In the summer time at a picnic or croquet party they would be allowed, but at evening parties decidedly not.

MODERAT.—A beautiful complexion is produced by the use of milk of cucumbers. This preparation reduces all eruptions, sunbeams, freckles, renders the skin soft and by its constant use preserves a youthful appearance.

DON JUAN.—The symptoms you describe indicate a weak constitution. Bathe your head frequently with cold water, but do not weaken your health by using those poisonous washes to which you refer. Writing very good.

MARY A.—We are not acquainted with the firm you mention, so can give you no advice respecting it, but we deeply sympathize with you in your forlorn position and believe as you do that your undertaking must be successful.

PORTA.—Yours is a soft and yielding disposition, but in this case you must be firm. A gentle firmness is always necessary in your trying circumstances, and if you act rightly now you will regain the love and respect of your husband, who has really behaved very nobly towards you throughout the whole affair.

MISCHIEF.—Strawberry juice is a good cure for freckles, if it is applied frequently; do not spoil your skin by applying any of those washes. A clear skin is not so necessary or so beautiful as a fresh, healthy complexion. This, added to a bright, loving face, such as "Mischief" must have, will defy all the cosmetics to produce a prettier.

B. B. L.—There was no impropriety in your friend addressing the young lady by letter and afterwards in person. 2. If the young lady has objections to keeping company with any young gentleman, your friend may not hope to be an exception. However, as she acknowledges her pleasure at receiving him as a friend, he need not grow discouraged—friendship often ripens into love.

OCTACAMUS.—1. You do not say whether it is a lady's seminary or a students' college that you require. 2. If, as you say, you are quick at acquiring languages, twelve or eighteen months in the capital, with good instruction, should make you thoroughly conversant with the language, so that by practice and study you could acquire fluency.

MISER.—Cut some hard-boiled eggs, half mince the yolks with a few olives and capers, some anchovies thoroughly washed; a few truffle trimmings and a little tarragon and some pepper, and fill each half-egg with this mixture. Pour some liquified butter over and warm them in an oven. Then place each half-egg on a round sippet of bread fried in butter to a light yellow colour and serve.

OMEGA.—Any person who may wish to see the last will and testament of any individual in whose bequest he feels interest must not now go to Doctors' Commons but to Somerset House, whither the Registry of the Court of Probate has been removed. It is said to be a much luckier place than Doctors' Commons, but the authority is based in special licence experience, of which there is more at Somerset House, except among the officers, who are all happy and do not wish any increase of salary.

VENUS.—1. Yes, how to the gentleman next time you meet him, and, if he does not recognize you then, you will know that he does not care to continue the acquaintance. 2. Certainly, you should recognize all your acquaintances when you meet them. 3. There might be circumstances where a young lady could, with perfect propriety, attend an entertainment with a young gentleman to whom she has just been introduced, but generally such an action would be decidedly improper. 4. It would be poor taste to congratulate a young gentleman with whom you were but slightly acquainted on his engagement.

HARRY asks which questions he hopes will be worthy of our attention. "1. Is it customary and fashionable for a gentleman to present his affianced with a ring of the date of their engagement? 2. Upon which finger should a lady wear an engagement ring? 3. For a person in moderate circumstances what sort of ring would you suggest as being most suitable? How would a plain gold

To meet the expressed desire of our Readers

THE LONDON READER,

ON AND AFTER JANUARY 1, 1878,

WILL BE PUBLISHED

ON SATURDAY INSTEAD OF MONDAY

AS HERETOFORE

ring do P. 4. Is it in good taste to have a motto engraved upon the ring? If so, what would be suitable? Anything else you might suggest in connection with the subject of an engagement ring would be most thankfully received." It is usual to give a ring. Ladies do not like plain gold, or indeed plain anything in such connections. You must spend a little in giving pleasure. The engaged finger is now the third finger on the left hand, and should be a ring with a diamond or a stone of less value of any description other than an opal, which is considered fatal to the occasion. Your wisest plan is to call upon a respectable jeweller, tell him how far you can prudently go, see a few rings and bring the young lady to choose from them. A motto is common but useless. The date of engagement is not unfitting. The only other matter we think it proper to say is may this ring be the pledge of lasting fidelity.

A FRIEND AT LAST.

The shadows fell across the street,
The moon looked coldly down,
When, trudging on with weary feet
O'er pavements icy grown,
A homeless child sought charity
Of those to her unknown.

She heard the shouts of laughter swell
Out on the bitter air,
She heard the sound of many a bell,
And joy seemed everywhere
Save in her own poor heart. Alas!
Pain was the dweller there.

Often most rudely pushed aside,
She paused and sobbed aloud,
While swiftly passed the living tide,
And pleasure ruled the crowd;
Alas! that one poor heart like hers
With grief should there be bowed.

Beauty in richest silks trailed by,
With diamonds dazzling bright;
Her heart seemed dead to charity
And filled with cold delight,
She could not heed the plaintive cry
Of one that festal night.

But hushed became that pleading tone
While yet the crowd surged past,
And when the morning light came down
And 'round its glory cast,
The silent, worn-out, lifeless one
Had found a friend at last.

C. D.

HENRY L.—Rubbing the hands gently with a piece of pumice-stone with a flattened surface will tend to make them white.

SARAH H., twenty-five, good looking, medium height, dark brown hair and eyes, good tempered, would like to correspond with a respectable young man.

ANNIE, rather short, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, wishes to correspond with a young man, fond of home, with a view to matrimony.

LILLIAN and MARION, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. Lillian is twenty-two, fair, brown hair and eyes, medium height and slender. Marion is nineteen, fair, light hair and blue eyes, tall and rather stout; respondents must be tall and passable in looks; tradesmen or clerks preferred.

LOVING CLARA, seventeen, medium height, dark brown hair and eyes, loving disposition, wishes to correspond with a respectable young man; a clerk in a trade preferred.

DARBY by—Annie Louise, eighteen, medium height, rather dark, thoroughly domesticated and of a very loving disposition.

JERRY, eighteen, good looking and affectionate, wishes to correspond with a respectable young man about twenty.

J. T., twenty-two, medium height, light hair and blue eyes, thoroughly domesticated, would like to correspond with a young gentleman between twenty and twenty-three.

HELEN, twenty, medium height, dark, well educated and with good prospects, would like to correspond with a young widow lady, with an income of her own, with a view to matrimony.

TOM BOWLING, a respectable and intelligent young man, twenty-six, medium height, dark complexion, of a loving disposition, has a business in the country, and possessing a comfortable home, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty, medium height, who is well educated; respondent must be good looking, and have a little money.

DOLLY and AMY, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Dolly is tall, fair, considered good looking, fond of music and skating; Amy is tall, fair, blue eyes, good looking, also fond of music and skating. Respondents must be tall,

dark, good looking, of a loving disposition, and have a private income.

CIS, fair complexion, tall and fond of music, wishes to correspond with a young man about twenty-three, with a view to matrimony; a sailor preferred.

WALTER P., 5ft., gray eyes, curly hair, considered good looking, wishes to correspond with a young lady; a tailoress preferred.

B. R., twenty-five, and B. M. A., twenty, two young ladies of prepossessing appearance, would like to correspond with two respectable young gentlemen with a view to matrimony.

H. C., twenty, tall, dark complexion, brown hair and eyes, fond of home, would like to correspond with a respectable mechanic; respondent must be good tempered and fond of home.

LUCE B., nineteen, medium height, fair complexion, brown hair, gray eyes, wishes to correspond with a respectable young man with a view to matrimony; respondent must be tall, dark and rather good looking; a tradesman preferred.

MARION B., twenty-eight, rather short, fair complexion, brown hair, blue eyes and very good tempered and domesticated, would like to correspond with a respectable young man with a view to matrimony; respondent must be tall and dark; a tradesman preferred.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

B. S. T. is responded to by—E. D., who is domesticated but not good looking; has brown hair and dark blue eyes.

GEORGE B. by—Lilly, who is very fond of home, and would make a good wife.

HARRY by—Tina, who thinks that she is all he requires.

F. C. F. by—H. R. S., rather tall, blue eyes, dark hair, and good looking.

TERENCE by—L. C., nineteen, medium height, fair complexion, of a loving disposition, and thoroughly domesticated.

KITTY by—R. S. E., a young clerk, respectfully connected, and in a good position.

ELLA by—Charles, in good position and highly educated.

R. W. by—Emily, sixteen, medium height, fair, considered good looking, thoroughly domesticated, and thinks she is all he requires.

R. S. by—Eva, fair, blue eyes and of a loving disposition, respectfully connected, has a little money, and thinks she is all he would require.

H. B. by—Loving Nell, seventeen, medium height, dark brown hair, of a loving disposition, and dressmaker by trade.

Now Ready the CHRISTMAS (DOUBLE) PART (Parts 152, 153), containing EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBERS, with complete Stories, Illustrated. Price One Shilling, by post One Shilling and Fourpence.

ALL the BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES of the "LONDON READER" are in print and may be had at the Office, 334, Strand; or will be sent to any part of the United Kingdom Post-free for Three-halfpence, Eightpence, and Five Shillings and Eightpence each.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free, Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL, Parts 1 to 4, Price Threepence each.

LIFE and FASHION, Vols. 1 and 2, Price Seven Shillings and Sixpence.

* Now Ready Vol. XXV. of THE LONDON READER. Price 4s. 6d.

Also, the TITLE and INDEX to Vol. XXV., Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 151 (NOVEMBER), Now Ready, Price Sixpence, post-free Eightpence.

N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 334, Strand, W.C.

† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by G. A. SMITH.